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Yours truly
John Ashworth

STRANGE TALES

FROM

H U M B L E L I F E .

BY

JOHN ASHWORTH.

"The Lord be with you always."

THIRD CANADIAN EDITION

TORONTO :
WESLEYAN METHODIST CONFERENCE OFFICE,
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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION.

THESE Narratives are true ; they come from my own experience and observation, and were first written for the humbler classes, amongst whom Eighty Thousand Volumes and more than Three Millions of Tracts, or portions of the Narratives, are already in circulation.

HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY THE QUEEN has been presented with my books at her own request.

LORD SHAFTESBURY asked me how soon the Second Volume would be out, for he was anxious to have one.

DR. GUTHRIE said, in the Assembly Hall, Edinburgh, "John Ashworth's books are beyond all my praise ; they are circulating by thousands (yea, by millions,) and not only in the cottages of the poor, but in the mansions of the rich."

JOHN BRIGHT said, "I have presented Newman Hall with your books, to read on his passage to America."

THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD says, "My son, in his letter from India, informs me your books are much read there, and, with God's blessing, will do much good.

MR LEATHAM, then M. P. for Wakefield, publicly said, "There is only one book—the Bible—that has been a greater blessing to me than these simple annals of the poor."

C. H. SPURGEON says, "Nothing can be more interesting than these narratives—they are thrilling.

LORD TEYNHAM said, "I found them in great request amongst the people of the Shetland Islands."

PREFACE.

SIR JAMES KAY SHUTTLEWORTH said to Professor Owen, "I hope Mr. Ashworth will present to you a copy of his 'Strange Tales from Humble Life,' which is well worthy of a place both in your own Library and in that of the British Museum."

A COAL MINER says, "We come together in the bottom of the coal-pit during the dinner hour, and by the dim light of our candles hear the reading of your 'Strange Tales' with the greatest interest."

Very many more, rich and poor, send their thanks for the great good they have received. I hope I am grateful that God has enabled me to write a work that is read by all sects and parties, and by all classes, from the Collier to the Queen, and not in our own country merely, but in other nations in at least six different languages. To *Him only* be all the praise.

JOHN ASHWORTH.

Rochdale, Dec. 1870.

PREFACE TO FIRST CANADIAN EDITION.

THAT "truth is stranger than fiction," and that actual occurrences, well told, are vastly more interesting than imaginary ones—no matter how highly coloured—is clearly shown in the following pages.

JOHN ASHWORTH, the author of these "Tales," is well known in Rochdale, and many other parts of England, as the founder of the CHAPEL FOR THE DESTITUTE, and the champion for the poor and the outcast. Possessing a soul glowing with benevolence, piety, and zeal, he has been a most successful instrument in rescuing the fallen from the lowest depths of sin and misery to the service of HIM who saved a Saul of Tarsus and a Mary Magdalene.

The narratives are admirably given in the author's own language, and are strictly true. The names mentioned are real names, both of persons and places; and many of the sketches are of a most thrilling character.

These Tales breathe the true spirit of vital religion, which cannot fail to benefit the hearts and lives of those who read them. The work should, therefore, be in every Sunday School Library, as well as in every family in the land.

Forty thousand bound volumes, and about two millions of copies in tract form, have been sold in England, and the demand continues to increase.

This first Canadian Edition is given to the public with the earnest hope that its wide circulation will be productive of great and permanent good.

TORONTO, 1868.

PREFACE TO SECOND CANADIAN EDITION.

THE rapid sale of the first edition, and the many assurances from both ministers and people of the excellencies of this work, have induced the Book Steward to undertake the printing of a larger edition than the first, with the earnest hope and prayer that the Divine blessing may attend its extended circulation.

TORONTO, 1869.

PREFACE TO THIRD CANADIAN EDITION.

THE demand for these TALES has exhausted the whole of the *Second Edition*, and still the demand continues. To meet this growing desire for these highly-valued productions, the Book Steward has obtained from the author the right to publish in Canada as many of the same and all subsequent tracts written by him, as may be required. Praying that the Giver of all good may continue His blessings on these messengers of truth, he sends forth this *Third Canadian Edition* of "*Strange Tales from Humble Life*."

This edition will soon be followed by another volume containing the author's latest productions of "*Strange Tales*;" and also by his "*WALKS IN CANAAN*," a book full of thrilling incidents and historic facts.

TORONTO, July, 1871.

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STRANGE TALES FROM HUMBLE LIFE.

THE DARK HOUR

ON returning from a morning appointment at Lower-place, on Sunday, the 15th of November, 1859, two strong, big-boned, but very poorly-clad men, were coming in the opposite direction. When we met, I took hold of an arm of each, and, in as kindly speech as possible, asked them where they were going to spend God's good day.

The elder one answered,—“We are going to waste it as fast as we can.”

“Waste it! waste it! Did you never hear that Queen Elizabeth offered her physician a great sum of money if he would prolong her life a single day?”—I inquired.

“Yes, she might; but what we say is true. The fact is, we both came into town last evening, and are in a miserable lodging-house, and prefer rambling through the streets to sitting in such a wretched place; though I have left two children in the house, for I did not like to fetch them out into the street this cold day,”—replied the same man.

“Did you not see a paper on the wall in the lodging-house you speak of?”—I asked.

"Yes, I did," responded the younger, "but I thought it was an almanac."

"No, it is a card inviting the lodgers to a place of worship, called the Chapel for the Destitute. There is a large congregation, all very poor,—good singing,—no collections,—and I shall be very glad to see you both there to-night."

"Well, sir, the fact is, I do not know what to do. I pawned the handkerchief off my neck last night, for a shilling, to pay the lodgings for myself and children. I have never been so reduced as at present. I am no drinker, my wife is at Halifax, with two of our youngest children, waiting until I get employment; and when I return to my miserable lodgings, I do not know whether the landlord will give me credit till to-morrow."

"Well, my dear sirs, come to the Chapel this evening, and your lodgings shall be paid."

"Thank God! you have lifted a weight from my breast," exclaimed the elder man. "And from mine, too," said the younger.

That night both made their appearance at the Chapel. After service, Johnson, for that was the name of the elder person, introduced his two little girls, who made a very nice curtsey; and on their receiving one penny each, the father sixpence, and the other man three-pence, all four faces brightened up with joy at the paltry gift of eleven-pence.

On the following morning, the younger man went on to Oldham, but Johnson remained in Rochdale to seek employment at his own trade,—gardening, or any other spade work. For several days he tried hard, travelling over many miles of ground, but without success; and night found him standing before my house, the very picture of anxiety,—for he could not beg, and having nothing wherewith to

pay his lodgings, or buy bread for his two children, he did not know where to look for help. His only hope was, that if I saw him I might pity his condition, and again render him assistance. At night I found him walking to and fro; he was drenched in the rain, the water was dropping from his hat, and his appearance was miserable in the extreme. On seeing me he pretended to be walking past, lest I might think he was again looking for me.

My heart melted for the poor man, and, in as kind words as possible, I asked him if he had succeeded in getting anything to do.

"No, sir, I have been many miles round, but I have not been able to get one penny, or a promise of employment; and I do not know whatever I must do. I do not care so much for myself, but the sufferings of my wife and children weigh me down. I am afraid to go to my lodgings, for I expect we shall be turned out this night, dark and wet as it is."

"Well, my man, take this half-crown, pay your lodgings and buy some food; still do your best to get work, and when your money is done, call on me again."

Before I could prevent him, Johnson had taken off his hat; he took the half-crown with a convulsive grasp; the light from the gas lamp shining on his countenance revealed the tears running down his face; he tried hard to speak his thanks, but the emotion choked his utterance.

"Never mind, Johnson, put on your hat, and thank God for what you have got; for all the silver and gold is His; I am only His steward."

The following day Johnson called, quite overjoyed. He had got a promise of work, and told me he had written to Halifax requesting his wife to come as soon as possible. I

was accidentally present at their meeting. The elder girls clasped their little brother and sister in their arms, in transports of joy. The pale-faced mother (who I perceived would soon bring another to share their joys and sorrows) wept in silence. Johnson stood gazing with mingled feelings on his helpless family.

But a grievous disappointment awaited Johnson. The man who had promised him work had no authority for so doing ; and when he went, expecting to begin, he was told that he could not be engaged. When the keeper of the lodging-house heard this, he demanded payment before either Johnson or his family should retire to their miserable beds. Poor man ! he had not anything wherewith to pay, and begged permission to remain till morning, offering part of his garments for security, which was reluctantly accepted.

On the following morning they were all turned into the street. They wandered about for several hours, when seeing an empty cellar, they got permission to remain in it for a few days. Mother and children sat down on the bare, damp flags, whilst the father went out to buy two penny-worth of coals, and a half-penny candle. Throughout the night which followed, Johnson sat on the flagged floor, before the flickering fire, with two children on each side, making his legs their pillows, and his pale, delicate wife leaning against his back. Did they sleep ? Yes, the children slept, and sobbed in their sleep,—for bread.

That night Johnson was almost driven to despair. Dark thoughts passed through his troubled soul. The last flickering glimmer from the expiring embers had died away, and left them in utter darkness. His sorrowing wife, knowing he had done his best, did not utter a word of complaint, fearing to increase his grief by repining, yet could

not suppress all indication of her own feelings. He would have tried to comfort her, but the anguish of his own soul extinguished all power of words, and he felt speechless ; for though they were both unable to sleep, yet they sat in silence,—no sound but the fitful slumbers of their four children, as they lay huddled together without the least covering. Is it strange that Johnson's thoughts were dark ? Can we be surprised that gloomy emotions passed through his troubled soul ? Less than the suffering of that night has driven many to absolute recklessness, and made their cases a thousand times worse, by associating with a passing misfortune, a permanent disgrace. Honest poverty will not descend to crime.

But there is a God ! This Johnson believed ; and though he had not called on Him in prosperity,—as he now felt he ought to have done,—yet many a silent petition went up to Him whose eye seeth in the darkness, and who turneth not a deaf ear to the cry of the poor. Nor did he pray alone. The sighs of his suffering partner were many of them sighs for help. But when the long-looked for morning dawned, and the cold, grey streak of light fell on the still sleeping children, the sight of their misery was even worse than their thoughts had imagined.

About noon that day, the eldest girl called at my house to know if I had seen her father. She wept while she told me that they had been forced to leave the lodging-house, and that they were in a cellar in Cheetham Street ; that her father had gone out to seek for work, and her mother was very unhappy and poorly. I gave the child a little for their immediate wants, and promised to call and see them in the evening.

On the Tuesday evening,—dark and cold,—I put on my

overcoat, took my stick, put some money in my pocket, and went out to visit several of my poor friends. For,—people may say what they will,—one way to a poor man's heart is through his stomach. St. John asks how the love of God can dwell in that man's heart, who sees his brother in need, and keeps his pocket buttoned !

“There is a golden chord of sympathy,
Fixed in the harp of every human breast,
Which, by the breath of kindness swept,
Wakes angel-melodies in savage breasts ;
Melts icy hearts of hate to streams of love ;
Nor aught but kindness this fine chord can touch.”

Mrs. B., the first object of my visit, resided in Dunkirk. Afflicted with asthma, she sat by the fire, gasping for breath. On perceiving me she rose, took hold of my hand, and, in a tremulous, broken voice, said, “Bless you for coming to see me ! You will pray for me before you leave ! I know you will.”

“Well, Martha, what do you want me to pray for ?” I asked.

“That the Lord will have mercy on my poor soul, for I feel I want Him to pardon my sins ; but I think He hardly ought to do it yet, for I have been a dreadful sinner,” was her answer.

“Then you, like poor Martin Luther, are for working for salvation. You intend to mend yourself, some way or other, and not to seek immediate pardon through faith in a dear, dying Jesus ;—to be saved by works of righteousness, and not by the renewing of the Holy Ghost ; is it so, Martha ?”

“O no, no ; I am conscious that we are saved through faith, but I am such a sinner ! such a sinner ! Do kneel down and pray for me,”

I did kneel down in that dimly-lighted, poor cottage, with its bare walls and scant furniture,—knelt at the throne of grace, for the afflicted Magdalene,—knelt until heart-broken cries of anguish burst from her heaving breast. Angel of the Covenant! Thou binder up of the broken heart! Thou promised Comforter, to Thee we prayed!—nor prayed in vain.

On my taking leave of Martha, she blessed God for His goodness, in providing a place of worship to which she could come in her rags and clogs.

Johnson's cellar, in Cheetham Street, was my next place of call. After a little inquiry, I descended the steps and knocked at the door. All was dark; a faint voice answered the knock, saying the door could not be opened. A strange fear came over me; I was afraid something was wrong. Thinking they would know my voice, I spoke through the key-hole, but still received the same answer. I ascended the steps, walked to and fro for at least an hour, then tried the door again. Johnson opened it. Poor man! he had been to seek work, and had locked the door at his wife's request. There he stood the picture of sorrow! The children lay huddled in the corner, covered with the mother's shawl; she lay on the floor, her head leaning against the wall, evidently in great pain; the eldest girl, about nine years old, stood looking at her mother, with tears streaming down her cheeks. Not an article of furniture was in the house; the fire had almost died out for want of fuel; a thin candle, nearly spent, was on the mantle-piece, held up by two child's shoes.

Instantly suspecting that things were even worse than they appeared, I whispered to Johnson my fears. Poor man! He knelt down upon one knee, took hold of his wife's

hand, and tenderly asked her if she really stood in need of the doctor.

"I am afraid it is so," was her feeble answer.

Johnson, looking me in the face, clasped his hands in silent agony. Bidding him and the eldest girl follow, we went to the shop of a vendor of old furniture, and purchased two chairs, two stools, bed-stocks, a pan, kettle, several pots, knives, a table, and a candlestick. The broker and little girl carried home the goods, while Johnson and I went out and purchased three laps of clean straw, and to the grocer's for some provisions. The straw was opened out in a small windowless place, called the coal-house; the children removed, laid on the straw, and covered up; two neighboring women were fetched in, and a doctor got immediately. This done, I returned home: and in two hours Johnson came to inform me that another immortal had entered the world, before the mother could be lifted from the flags.

On retiring to my bed-room, that evening, turning on the gas, and lifting my watchguard from my neck, I wound up my watch, looked around on my pictures, furniture, bed-hangings, and carpet. I seemed in a palace. I, who had often looked at, and envied my rich neighbors, and murmured in my heart that I was so much below them in worldly circumstances, all at once found myself among the princes of the earth! The contrast between my comfortable home, and the miserable one I had just witnessed, seemed too great. My unthankfulness and my ingratitude never seemed so black, or my murmurings so sinful, as they did that evening. I have often blessed God that He has entrusted me, as steward, with a little of what enabled me to be a blessing to others. To cause the widow's heart to rejoice; to wipe the orphan's tear; to lessen human woe; to

mitigate, in any degree, the sorrows of our fellow-men,—heaven has decreed that these shall be productive of great pleasure to the happy instrument. The cold-handed, icy-hearted, soul-shrivelled money-hoarder, that has “nothing to spare,” never drinks at this fountain of bliss. The god of this world has blinded his eyes, and mixed his poor dross with gall. “He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.” There is a sting in those words that has pierced many a miser’s heart. But “blessed is he that considereth the poor. The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble; the Lord will preserve him and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed in the earth; and Thou wilt not deliver him to the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him on the bed of languishing; Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.” God spake these words, through the mouth of David; but all must be done to His glory if we ever get the blessing.

The ensuing evening I went to see how matters stood with Johnson. I found the bed set up, and about one half of the straw spread on the cords. One of the poor women who had been with Mrs. J. during the night, had brought a thin bed-cover; made of patches and print, and hung it on one side of the bed to prevent the cold air from blowing; for the bed was close to the door, the only place where it could stand. Johnson had found as many things as possible for covering; among them his only coat. Mrs. J. was very feeble; she could not taste food, and had several attacks of shivering. Her life hung on a very slender thread. The doctor had been to see her, and left orders that she was to be kept very quiet.

Percceiving that our work was but half done, and that, unless warmth and nourishment were immediately admin-

istered, she would die, I went at once to a neighbouring pawn-shop, and bought a bed-case for two shillings and sixpence, and the good lady gave me a half-bottle of wine; next, to a second-hand clothes shop, to purchase some flocks; found quite enough, price seven shillings, for which the good woman would not receive a farthing, when she heard what they were for. My wife sent up some clean linen and a pillow-case the night previous. Two women filled the bed and case with flocks. I carried the half-bottle of wine and some sago, and then left to attend our church-meeting, whilst the fresh bedding was substituted. On my return a great change for the better had taken place. A few tea-spoonfuls of the wine had revived our patient; the flock bed and pillows gave ease to her poor bones, and she seemed warm and comfortable.

The children had now got all the straw. Two of the youngest (not including the last comer) lay huddled in one corner, and the third—a fine girl of seven—was partly undressed. She knelt down on the flags beside her bed of straw, clasped her hands, and closed her eyes, her chemise dropping from her little shoulders to her arms. And, O! what a prayer did that child offer to God! The moment she began I pulled off my hat and bowed down my head. The deep emotions that passed through my heart can never be expressed. I have heard thousands of prayers, and many of them from God's most gifted servants, but none ever affected me like the prayer of that little child. She repeated her "Our Father;" asked the Lord to bless her father, mother, sisters, brother, and the little baby, finishing with these words:—"O God, our Heavenly Father! Thou art good to us; we would love Thee, and serve Thee. We have sinned and done wrong many times, but Jesus Christ

has died on the cross for us. Forgive us our sins for Jesus' sake ! May the Holy Spirit change our hearts, and make us to love God ! and, when we die, may we go to heaven !"

To see the poor child kneeling on the damp flags, beside her bed of straw, and hear her faint, clear voice thanking God for his goodness, and praying for the Holy Spirit to change her heart, and this under such circumstances, melted me down to tears. I felt as if some angel of mercy, as in the case of Daniel, would come down and tell the little thing her prayer was heard. That moment was to me a moment of unspeakable joy, and amply repaid me for all I had done.

I wiped the tears from my eyes, sat down beside the mother's bed, and asked her if she had heard the prayer. "Yes," was her quick answer, "and I felt it, too. The prayers of my children have often lightened my load of sorrow ; they are always new to me, though I taught them. But, O ! sir, just before you came into the house last night, when I lay on the floor, and knew in what state I was,—nothing to lay down upon, no food for my poor sobbing children, my poor husband seeking work, and, I know, almost beside himself, in a strange place, and without friends—I thought God's mercy was clean gone. IT WAS A DARK HOUR ! I tried to look at the promises, but there was not one for me. One promise that has cheered me many times, and that I have often repeated, I could not call to mind ; but it is come back now :—'They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion that cannot be moved.' Yes ; I have it now ; but it was a dark hour."

"But do you not see that, at the very time God's mercies seemed clean gone, they were just coming ?" I replied.

"Yes, but I could not see behind the cloud, and faith seemed dead to me. I have seen better days, and have not

been thankful ; when I am a little stronger you shall know more of my history. The Lord has chastened me for my good."

Johnson was leaning against the bed-post, catching the faint words of his wife during the conversation, and gave it as his conviction that the Almighty would not let me leave his house on the preceding evening ; for had I done so, " his dear Mary " would have died.

" Well, thank God, and not me, for anything that has been done ; for I am only like that old tea-pot that stands by the fire-side. When you get a good cup of tea, you do not thank the tea-pot, do you ? "

" Well, perhaps not ; but in this case, let both me and my wife thank both God and the tea-pot, then. "

Returning home, I felt concerned about Johnson's still being without work. Having a friend who employed about five hundred hands, and thinking he might perhaps find him some place as a labourer, I at once went to his house and knocked at the door. He was just locking up, but, knowing my voice, he opened the door. I apologised for my late visit, and walked into the sitting-room. His lady received me kindly. I told them my errand—told them the whole tale as it was. When I came to the child's prayer, they broke down. Mr. D., with tears streaming down his face, put his hand into his pocket, pulled out all the money he had—stammered out, " Here, give him that, and send him down to the works in the morning ; I will find him something to do. "

In the morning I went to tell Johnson I had got him work, and he must go back with me, and begin at once. Poor fellow ! he could not speak for joy. He was in his shirt sleeves, and I never saw a coat put on so quickly. The

eldest girl and the two neighbouring women took charge of his wife in his absence, and in about fourteen days she was able to go about the house and attend to her family ; but in the meantime the lifeless body of the "little stranger" had been carried in a plain box, and laid in our beautiful cemetery. He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb had called a cherub home.

Johnson now resides in a neat cottage, in a healthy neighbourhood ; his children have all along attended the Sabbath School, and on the Sabbath his voice is heard among the worshippers in the sanctuary. During the week he follows his occupation as a gardener, and on calling to see him a few days since, I found him reading his well-thumbed Bible (their companion in all their troubles), and was glad to see that the star of hope had chased away the gloom of the DARK HOUR.



A WONDER : OR, THE TWO OLD MEN.

AN ancient picture represents a grey-headed old man meeting with a young acquaintance in heaven. The two glorified spirits begin to talk of the wonders of redeeming grace, each claiming to be the subject of the greatest mercy. A company of angels, passing by, stop to hear their conversation ; to them the old man appeals, in defence of his greater claim of gratitude, on the ground of being converted in his old age ; declaring that in him the rich mercies of God were the most amazingly evident. The young man grounds his claim on the fact, that his heart had been early changed by Divine grace, and that his life on earth, though short, had been a life of joy and peace in the service of God. The most venerable of the angels replies, " Old man, you are indeed a brand plucked from the burning ; your long life, before your conversion, must have been one of sin and misery, and your example may have led some into the way of death, which must be forever deplored. But this young man, though brought home from his labors in the spring-time of life, may, while in the service of his God, have sown some seed that will be a rich harvest to many, and ultimately lead them here, to be stars in his crown. Our opinion is, that the greatest blessing falls to the lot of them that are converted in early life." This angelic verdict may be the

right one, but it would be difficult to persuade the two subjects of this narrative that these conclusions were just.

Every Sunday morning a poor old man, aged eighty-three, may be seen standing at the entrance to the Chapel for the Destitute, waiting that he might carry a small piece of paper, containing the number of the hymns, to the conductor of the choir. For nearly two years he had delighted to be employed in this humble office ; for old Lawrence Hoyle thinks it a great honor to do anything in the service of the sanctuary.

Fifty-five years ago this man, with his young, handsome wife, the mother of three children, was struggling hard with bitter poverty ; the little work he then had was away from home ; and she, besides toiling with her young family, tried to earn a few shillings by hand-loom weaving. She then found, what the poor have often found, that real poverty has little credit ; for, on requesting the grocer to let her have a few provisions, until she had finished and carried home her piece, he told her plainly that the score should not be increased. It was a cold Friday evening, and she had the three children with her. She returned home and made the two eldest ones a little very thin porridge. While they were trying to satisfy the cravings of hunger, she gave the breast to the little boy, and, when she had got them all to sleep,—two in the bed, and one in the cradle—she lighted the candle, and prepared for weaving all night, that she might take her piece home a day earlier, and obtain a few shillings to buy bread. And, strange as it may seem, that night she sang ! in tears she sang, in the lonely cot and breadless home ; lest all hope should die within her, she sang,—and the verse that went deepest down into her very soul, she sang with joy,—

“Though waves and storms go o’er my head,
Though strength, and health, and friends be gone.
Though joys be wither’d all and dead,
Though every comfort be withdrawn :
On this my stedfast soul relies :
Father, Thy mercy never dies.”

And while she was, with subdued voice, piously hymning her confidence in her Heavenly Father, a soft foot was heard on the doorstep. It was that of a friend, bringing a cake and sixpence, and that was the grocer’s wife. This was to the young Christian mother the first visible providence. And when, the following Sunday morning, she dressed herself and her children in their cleanest and best clothes,—when, to use her own expression, she “crept with the children behind the door in the chapel bottom,”—and while the minister (Mr. Crompton, of Bury) was preaching from the angel’s question to John, “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?”—her soul was filled with such holy rapture, that tears of joy dropped on her little boy, suckling at her breast. That Friday evening, and that Sunday morning, she spoke about fifty years after, as the beginning of her trials and triumphs.

Both saints and sinners are subject to trials, but there is an immense difference in their real positions. The sinner is without true peace; he is like the troubled sea that cannot rest; but the saint takes his burden to him who has promised to give him rest. The wife of Lawrence had oft to bring her burden there: for though she enjoyed more of real religion than is ordinarily attained, yet she knew more of domestic sorrow than falls to the lot of one in a thousand. She became the mother of nine children, and had to toil hard to make ends meet; for Lawrence had fallen into bad habits, and she was the wife of a *drunkard*. In that one

world is concentrated almost every trouble. A drunkard's wife, with a family of half-clad, half-fed children, is a pitiable sight; the wife trying to do her best, and the husband trying to do his worst! What a conflict! what a severe demand on patience! Many a woman has given up the struggle in despair, and lain down in an early grave; many have lost all self-respect, and lingered through a miserable life of stupid wretchedness. A drunkard's wife is a woman of sorrow. For fifty-five years, Peggy, the wife of Lawrence, was a quiet, peaceable, consistent member of the Christian church, and, for most of that time, in meekness and patience, she bore with almost every description of wickedness and abuse from her ungodly husband. And during the whole of that time she sent up her prayers to heaven, beseeching the Almighty not to cut him down in his sins, but to spare him until he saw himself a sinner, and sought mercy by faith in Christ Jesus.

The little boy that was suckling at the mother's breast in the chapel-bottom, on the memorable Sunday morning, was brought up to his father's business, a fulling miller. He married, left home, and went to reside at a place called Ridings. He could play on several instruments of music, but was especially fond of the flute. One Sunday, with the flute in his pocket, he came into the town, and called at the cottage in Gibson Row, to see his aged parents.

"William," said the old man, "where are you going with your flute?"

"To the Chapel for the Destitute," William replied.

"Chapel for the Destitute! Chapel for the Destitute! I have heard of that place. I think it is just the place for me, for I am destitute enough. I think I will go with you," said Lawrence.

"Do, Lawrence, do ; go and hear William play, you have not heard him for a long time," observed his wife. The old man put on his hat, and walked to the Chapel in company with his son, to hear him play the flute.

The moment old Lawrence set out for the service, the good old Christian wife crept up stairs, and, kneeling down before the Eternal, besought him to send conviction to the heart of her husband ; pleading for an answer, that night, to the thousands of prayers that had been offered up by her and her children, on behalf of father and husband. She wrestled hard and long, imploring and intreating, that this one long-sought request might, that very night, be granted.

At the Chapel the son, with his flute, took his place in the choir, and old Lawrence sat on a form near the preacher. The text that evening was "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us." And while the preacher was describing the presence of the angel with the three young men in the fiery furnace, holding back the power of the flames ; and the angels' presence with Daniel shutting the lions' mouths,—and declaring that every child of God, when passing through affliction, had an angelic body-guard, visible or invisible, the Holy Spirit sent home to the heart of the old sinner the power of gospel truth.

As Lawrence returned home his thoughts troubled him. He sat for a long time with his hands on his knees, silently gazing into the fire ; his wife, too, sat silent, anxiously looking at him. At last he said, "If I have an angel for my body-guard, he will be a *black* one."

"Whatever do you mean ?—what are you thinking about, Lawrence ?" eagerly asked his wife.

"I mean that I am a miserable man, and I fear eternally a lost man. Never till now did I see what a glorious thing

it is to be a child of God. O ! how safe they are ! God can deliver them ! And now I understand how it is that you have so patiently borne with all my base conduct ; how you have so meekly submitted to every insult : you have served God, and he has delivered you."

Lawrence spoke with unusual earnestness and solemnity. His aged partner had risen to her feet, and stood with clasped hands and streaming eyes. For some time her emotion was too deep for words. When able to speak, she said :—

O ! Lawrence, my dear Lawrence, you may have a *white* angel. You, too, may have a glorious, shining body-guard. For this very purpose God has spared you these many years, and for this I have prayed ten thousand times ; and has the Lord in very deed heard my petitions ? O ! Lawrence, Lawrence, do not, I beseech you, do not despair of God's mercy. He pardons iniquity, transgression, and sin, when the sinner seeks for pardon through our Redeemer."

Lawrence still sat gazing into the fire. Deep contrition was evident in his countenance ; the power of conviction caused him to tremble, and from the depths of his soul, he prayed that mercy might not be utterly gone. For many days he was on the borders of despair ; his good old wife read for him out of God's holy book, encouraging him to cast his whole soul on the merits of Jesus. She knelt and prayed with him day after day ; and the old man found, in his truly Christian wife, his greatest help in his struggle for pardon and salvation. He attended all the services at the Chapel for the Destitute, and went to other places where he thought he could receive benefit, till at last light and hope dawned on his mind. But darkness again returned, and the publican's cry, "God be merciful to me a

sinner!" burst from an agonizing, guilty soul. He sought mercy through Jesus, and God, for Christ's sake, heard his prayer. And that day an event took place which seldom takes place in this world; the old sinner found mercy and pardon,—the hoary-headed transgressor, when over eighty years of age, was made a child of God, by the power of saving grace.

The long looked-for day of happiness had come at last. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." There was great joy to the children of old Lawrence, when they heard of the change in their father; but there was the greatest joy to his aged partner. She wept for joy; and while telling me how happy they were, now that they could kneel down and worship God together, and how happy Lawrence was all the day, she said, "I believe we shall now be like Zachariah and Elizabeth, serving the Lord together."

Several weeks after the great change, Lawrence was anxious to have service in his house, for the sake of his wife, who could not walk to the Chapel, on account of weakness in one foot. Now this was one of the evidences of the change; for the family had long had occasional religious services at their dwelling, but Lawrence either walked out at the time of meeting, or doggedly sat in the corner, refusing to take the slightest notice, unless to persecute them. But he now came to make arrangements for my going to preach, not in his own house, for it was too small, but in a neighbouring one he had borrowed for the occasion. It was a winter's evening, and on arriving at the place I found Lawrence standing at the door, looking for me.

"Here he is!" he exclaimed; then turning quickly round said, "Come, my lass, put on your bonnet, Mr. Ashworth

is come." I followed him into the house, and there stood his amiable old partner, with the most radiant smiles on her countenance. She held out her hand to welcome me. I took her hand, saying, "I think the scales are turned now ; you have hundreds of times wished that your husband would go with you to the place of worship, and durst not ask him ; but now he says, 'Come, put on your bonnet !' What do you think of that ?"

"Think ! think ! Was there ever such a monument of God's mercy as my Lawrence ? O ! praise the Lord ! praise the Lord !"

"Come, lass," said Lawrence, "come, it is near the time ; put on your bonnet, and take hold of my arm, for we shall walk safer linking."

She laughed outright at the idea of linking, but took hold of his arm with much evident delight.

"How long is it since you linked before ?" I asked, rather playfully. "I think it is forty years since, if not more," Lawrence replied.

"Then it seems that when a man and his wife are both converted, they begin linking."

"Yes, it does seem so, for I never thought of such a thing before ; but I am sure I now love my old wife better than ever," he replied.

Lawrence told the truth, for the more a man and his wife love God, the more they will love each other.

The happy old couple walked on before, leading the way to the place ; and both seemed to enjoy greatly the service of that evening. On my taking leave of them, Lawrence besought both me and his wife to pray that he might be kept very humble, and hold fast his confidence to the end.

Several months after this, Mrs. Hoyle's sun began rapidly

to set : her afflicted foot affected her entire frame, yet with comparatively little suffering. She triumphantly reached the happy place where the sun never sets, for "there is no night there." She had selected a hymn to be sung at her funeral, and requested I would be present, read it out, and offer up prayer. On entering the house of mourning, Lawrence again met me at the door, in silence, his face bathed in tears. He took me by the hand, and led me to the coffin containing the remains of the aged Christian. I had never seen so old a person so beautiful in death. Lawrence took hold of her cold hand, and with choking utterance, spoke to her as if she had been alive, exclaiming, "O ! my dear, dear dead Peggy ! would to God I had died with thee. O ! how it pains me to think of my past conduct to thee. Bitter, indeed, has been thy cup, but it has been made bitter by me. Thy patience with thy cruel husband has been amazing. For many, many years I greatly increased thy sorrow, and thou hast patiently endured it all. One comfort is left me, for I know thou didst forgive me, and in thy last days didst pray with me and for me, and didst help me in my hour of sorrow for sin. But thou art gone, my best earthly friend, thou art gone, and for a short, very short time, hast left thine aged partner to mourn his heavy bereavement."

During the old man's address to his dead wife, his daughters stood weeping behind him. Those daughters had often joined their now silent mother in prayers for their erring parent. But, amidst their tears and sobs, they had the consolation to know that their mother was now in heaven, and their father on the way to meet her there.

Lawrence now resides with one of his married daughters. On the Sabbath morning he may be seen regularly worshipping in Baillie-street Chapel, and in the evening at the

Chapel for the Destitute. He has had much forgiven, and he loves much. On expressing a desire that he might, in some way, do a little good in his last days, and on asking my advice and direction, I said to him, that when Christ cast out Satan from the man in the tombs, He bade him go home to his friends, and tell them what great things God had done for him. And I thought he would be able to do good by going amongst old men and old women, telling them how he, a hoary-headed sinner, had obtained mercy.

"I am very unfit for such work, but if I knew where to begin I would try," he replied.

"Well, meet me at three this afternoon, and I will take you to an old man, aged eighty-five, and you can begin with him, for I believe he is anxious about his soul."

The old man here referred to had attended the Chapel for the Destitute about nine months. Every one that knew him laughed at the very thought of old Pinder attending a place of worship. Thirty years ago, placards might be seen in almost every street, informing the public that Pinder would worry rats with his hands tied to his back, at such a public-house, on such a day. This degrading exhibition was as follows:—A nail was driven into the middle of a large table, and a string tied to the nail and to the tail of the rat—the string just being long enough to prevent the rat from getting off the table. Pinder, with his hands tied behind him, caught the rats and worried them with his mouth, for sixpence each; and the spectators had to give threepence each for the gratification of witnessing this exhibition,—all profits, of course, going to the publican. In addition to worrying rats, he could leap over five-and-twenty chairs at five-and-twenty leaps; he would fight any man or any dog, and was the leader at bull-baits or dog-races. He

was a terrible character, had a strong constitution, and now, in his old age, he has the frame of a once powerful man. But, strong as he was, he informed me that his brother George was stronger; for he once carried a full grown donkey from Bury to Manchester (about nine miles), without once stopping to rest.

But Joseph Taylor (for that was his real name) was one of my most regular and attentive hearers; he seemed to drink in every word, and was very willing to be taught the way of salvation. Meeting him one Monday morning, a few months ago, he said, "I wanted to see you, for I am very uneasy; your text last night has made me very ill." The text to which Joseph referred was Revelation xx. 12:—"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

"Are the words you preached from God's truth? and is what we have done really written down against us?" Joseph earnestly inquired. "Yes, Joseph, so the word of God informs us," I replied.

"Dear me, if it be so, I have a weary shot on, and I mun have it out some road. Did not you say that the blood of Jesus Christ could wash it out?"

"Yes: Christ shed his blood that sin might be forgiven, man made happy, and made ready for heaven," I answered.

"I wish you would come and see me where I lodge, and tell me more about it, for it will never do as it is."

From that day to the moment I am writing, I have felt great interest in Joseph; and that was the reason I was anxious old Lawrence should go and see him. He met me

according to agreement, and accompanied me to the lodgings of the notorious old sinner.

The place where Joseph lived was a dark room down a narrow passage. I was glad to find him alone, and he seemed very glad of the visit. I told him some little about Lawrence,—how he had lived a very sinful life, and how he had been forgiven, and would, I thought, be able to teach him many things about the love of God in providing a Saviour for guilty man.

Lawrence placed his hat on the floor, sat down on a rickety chair, laid his hand on old Joseph's knee, and, looking him in the face, said,—“ Old friend, I feel for you. I feel for your poverty, for I, too, am very poor, and have known how keen and bitter a thing it is to be poor and dependent in old age. But, though I am poor in pocket, I am rich in my soul ; for though I have been one of the worst men God ever made, yet, in His wonderful goodness and mercy, He has spared my life and pardoned my sins. O ! my dear old brother, God is rich in mercy, and if you come just as you are, and believe with all your heart on the Lord Jesus Christ, He is able to save you. He has saved me; and if He has saved me, I think no one need despair, for I was the chief of sinners.”

All the time Lawrence was speaking to old Joseph, tears ran down the cheeks of both. Lawrence wept tears of sympathy and gratitude, and Joseph tears of sorrow and penitence. Wiping his face with his coat-sleeve, he replied, “ You are very good for coming to see me, and I like your talk very well. I have been on my knees many a score of times this last week, but it seems of no use. I feel the great black spot is not wiped off yet. O ! I have been such a bad man. I have been very cruel to my family, and

wicked every way. I have been drunk thousands of times, and have sworn millions of times. I have been guilty of everything but murder, and it is a wonder I have not done that. I am too bad for hell, never name going to heaven; yet I want to go where Jesus is, for I am always thinking of Him, how he died for sinners."

This last sentence caused Lawrence to lift up both hands, and he exclaimed with great earnestness, "What! are you always thinking about Him! Why, man, if you are always thinking about Him, He is not far off you. I was always thinking about Him; I thought I was at Calvary, on the spot where he was crucified; and I laid me down, put my arms round the bottom of the cross, and thought I felt his blood dropping on to me; and it seemed in a moment as if everything was changed. I felt so happy, that I began shouting out,—O Lord! O Lord! O, glory be unto my Saviour, and my God."

While Lawrence was talking, Joseph was kneeling down. He buried his wrinkled face in his withered hands,—his thin, long, white hair hanging over his fingers, and in deep agony said, "O Lord! O Lord; is there mercy?—Is there mercy? Do pray for me. O! do pray for me." Lawrence and I also knelt down, and I whispered him to engage in prayer for Joseph.

I have heard many strange prayers from the simple and unlearned, but none more simple or more strange, and I believe more earnest, than that prayer offered by old Lawrence for his aged brother seeking mercy. After a moment's pause, he began,—“O Lord God Almighty! Thou sees us three kneeled on these flags; two of us are converted and the other wants to be. Thou had a job when Thou saved me, and now there is another of the same sort; but Thou

did save me, and Thou can save old Joe. I think he is very near saved, but somehow he does not think so; but he will soon think so; if he holds on as he is doing, for nobody 'at loves Jesus goes to hell. O Lord, just do for him as Thou did for me."—"John, you pray, for you are more used to it than I am."

But Joseph had begun, for his spirit was crushed within him. With heaving breast and choking words he confessed his sins, in bitterness of spirit. He bewailed his past life, and saw no hope that sin and wickedness such as his could ever be forgiven, finishing with these words, "O Lord, if Thou does not forgive me, there is no chance for me, and I shall as sure be lost as ever I was born; and what a thing that will be! But I 'liver myself up to Thee entirely. Thou hast saved this other old man, happen Thou can save me too. Jesus Christ died for me, same as him, and I will 'liver myself up to Him entirely; if he can save me, He shall do, for I will never give it up while I live."

In consequence of the great distress occasioned by the cotton famine, the person with whom Joseph lodged was compelled to retire to a smaller house. On being informed that he must leave, the old man was greatly affected, and spent most of the following day in tears. Hearing of the circumstance, I repaired to his dwelling, and found him seated by the fire, wondering what was to become of him. He was receiving two shillings and sixpence weekly from the parish, and paid one shilling for his lodgings. Since he had become a praying man, they had been very kind to him; and he feared going to the Workhouse, for then he could not come to the Chapel, and might get among wicked men, who would mock him, and do him "harm in his mind."

"What would you take for Joseph's bed, just as 'it

stands!" I asked of the housekeeper. "Well, I think it is worth twelve shillings. There are one long and two short pillows, two sheets, a quilt, bed, and bed-stocks. I cannot sell them for less.

"I should think not," I replied: "here is the money; and now I must make a present of the bed to Joseph, and find him a quiet corner to set it in, with some one that will be as kind to him as you have been."

When the old man saw the money paid down, and heard my promise to find him another home, he lifted up his head, and gazed in my face with a look of inexpressible thankfulness. He wept like a child, exclaiming, "God has done it! God has done it! He yeard me pray et neet, and sent yo to help me awt o' me trouble. He's done more nor I expected, and aw'l praise Him as long as awe live."

It is now several weeks since this took place. Joseph regularly attends the Chapel for the Destitute; for he says he gets more light every time he comes, and wishes he had begun at first. Lawrence goes often to see him, and the two old men may be frequently seen praying together. At my request, several experienced Christians and ministers have been to see Joseph, and their uniform opinion is, that the old man enjoys saving grace, but seems afraid of professing too much.

This day, September 29, 1862, I met Joseph in the street. On enquiring, as usual, after his welfare, his answer was, "Bless God, through the love of my Saviour Jesus Christ, I now enjoy peace! O! how I do love God! And I am sure He loves me, and I feel I shall go to Him before long. Lawrence has been praying with me to-day, and we have both felt very happy. What a wonder it is that two old men should be saved so late on!"

Yes, Joseph expressed the right word—It is a WONDER ! An old man of eighty-three, only twelve months a pardoned sinner, earnestly, and in the best way he could, urging an old man of eighty-five to trust in Christ, is such a wonder as falls to the lot of few to witness. Here knelt two men, whose lives had been one long course of open iniquity, producing untold misery, sorrow, and suffering in their families, and, probably, by their example and precept, having been the direct cause of many going down to the regions of despair. Yet these two have found mercy and forgiveness.

But let not others presume. Since these men were born, near three generations have gone to eternity ; three thousand millions of human beings have changed worlds, and have had their doom irrevocably fixed. Sinners of twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, and sixty years of age have died by thousands, and without doubt died in their sins. Men and women who trifle with God's mercies, and refuse His offers of salvation, at any age, are running terrible risks ; but to defer the day of salvation, under the plea that it will be soon enough when they get old, is madness. We may not live to be old ; only one in seven hundred does. Provided we should, sin may have so hardened our hearts, that the very desire for salvation may be entirely gone ; and this is the reason that so few old people are saved after they become old. Lawrence and Joseph were ; but we repeat, it is a marvel and a WONDER !



SANDERSON AND LITTLE ALICE.

KING Street, or Packer Meadow, is considered by the inhabitants of Rochdale as anything but a respectable section of the town. One or two of the residents in the lower part are in moderate circumstances, but at the upper end the houses are of the most wretched description. Sanderson, the subject of this narrative, occupied one of the better houses, and my acquaintance with him began through the howling of his dog,—a dark, red, bushy-tailed animal, so like a fox, that he had got that marauder's name.

In one part of the street a poor man lay dying. I was called in to read and pray with him, and had sat by his bed some time, when Fox came underneath the window, and set up a most dismal howl. Jane Moorhouse, a relative of the dying man, sprang up from her seat, exclaiming,—“It is all over with Richard. Fox is shouting, and when that dog shouts, death is sure to follow; it never misses when he howls in the night.”

“Does the dog belong to some one in the neighbourhood?” I asked.

“Yes,” was her answer, “it belongs to Sanderson, a man that neither believes in heaven or hell, God nor devil; and never is any person about to die in this street, but Fox howls, as the sure sign of death. He howled when Moss

and Simpson died, and hastened their end ; if he howled under my window I should expect to die in twelve hours. O, how I tremble !” On leaving the sick man’s chamber, and reaching the street, Fox was walking quickly up and down, still making his really fearful noise ; but a touch from my walking-stick sent him speedily home.

It is no easy matter to divest ourselves of the superstitious, tormenting traditions imbibed in early years. The howling of dogs is considered a prelude of death by thousands. We know that dogs howl at the sound of music, or when the moon is rising on a clear, calm night,—“baying the moon,” as Shakespeare calls it. On hot, sultry nights they often howl to each other ; and that some dogs can scent decaying animal matter at a great distance, and smelling it, will give a howl indicating the discovery, is well known. Many contend that this is the true philosophy of their shouting when near the houses of the dying. But this does not apply in all cases, and, perhaps, in none ; it cannot apply to the healthy, though Mrs. Moorhouse believed it did, and it is a pity that the sick should be frightened by any such foolish superstition. The shooting of cinders from the fire foretelling a coffin,—bad luck from light-haired persons “taking in” the new year,—the cracking of furniture and the howling of dogs indicating death, belong to a day when Sunday-schools were unknown, when books were few, and witches and fortune-tellers plentiful.

The old lady’s description of Sanderson’s creed, or, rather no creed, I found to be correct. His hatred to “parsons” (as he called ministers) was intense ; the sight of one of them operated upon him like the sight of water to a mad dog, and made him howl almost as loud as his own old Fox. Sanderson was a machine card-maker by trade. He had

several acquaintances of his own way of thinking, and on Sundays they were often found together, rambling through the fields, or reading their favourite books and newspapers, and hardening each other in their gloomy principles. He was about thirty-five years of age, when his neighbours began to talk of his altered looks ; his stout form was giving way, severe coughing set in, and he was, in the opinion of many, a marked man. In misty or cold weather he kept his room, and ultimately became unable to walk up and down the stairs. An old shoemaker, named Philip Powles, a Primitive Methodist, became much concerned about the spiritual state of his dying infidel neighbour ; he, however, durst not go to see him himself, but earnestly entreated Mr. Britton, a zealous Primitive Methodist minister, to undertake the hazardous task.

Mr. Britton went to see Sanderson, at the request of the anxious shoemaker. On entering the house, he informed Mrs. Sanderson of his wish to see her husband, adding that he was informed he was an infidel, but he had come to talk with him about his soul, for he was sure he had one.

"I am very sorry you have come on such an errand, for I am sure my husband will not see you, and it would very much vex and disturb him if he knew you were in the house. I am pained that it is so," observed Mrs. Sanderson.

"I come purposely to disturb him ; for he had better be disturbed here than damned hereafter. If God in His mercy does not disturb him, he will be lost for ever ! Just go up stairs, if you please, and ask if I may see him."

Poor woman ! she knew not what to do. She was afraid to offend her husband or the minister ; but Mr. Britton persisted, and at last she went up stairs, and began quietly to arrange the various little things about the room, fearing to

tell her real errand ; but Sanderson had heard a strange voice in the house, and inquired who was below.

"A gentleman of the name of Britton, whom Philip Powles requested to call and see you ; I think he is the minister of Philip's church."

"Tell him that I shall not see him, and when I need him or any other parson, I will let them know." He spoke these words so sharply that Mrs. Sanderson quickly left the room, and closed the door after her.

"Well, what does he say ?" asked Mr. B. "That he will not see you or any other minister," was her reply.

"I have a good mind to kneel down at the bottom of the stairs and pray so loud that he will hear. The Lord have mercy upon him before it be too late !"

Mr. Britton's colleague, hearing of the matter, charged him with being "soft," and determined to go himself and see the infidel, whatever consequences might follow.

Sanderson had strictly ordered his wife not to allow any parson, or professor of religion, by any means to enter the room. She knew his temper, and when the second Primitive minister came, she told him of her peremptory orders.

"Well, but I have come to see him, and I intend to see him," was the answer ; "and if you dare not ask permission, I will go up at once, and take all consequences."

Fortunately, her husband heard all the conversation, and called from the top of the stairs, that "if any parson dared to enter his room, *he would smash his brains out with the poker.*" I give his own words, that the reader may better understand the morose, untamed character of the man. He also ordered his wife to fetch a policeman to turn him out immediately. This caused our good Primitive brother to

beat a retreat, and rather altered his opinion of Mr. Britton's "softness."

Now Sanderson was one of those characters whom circumvention would most readily overcome. He was an intelligent reader of one class of books, and always ready for an argument: he was extreme in politics, entertaining republican notions: his collection of books was numerous for a man in his position; his knowledge of history was extensive, and he always maintained that all civil evils sprang from either king-craft or priest-craft. Cobbett's "Legacy to Parsons," and Paine's "Two-pennyworth of Common Sense," were his text books. All these things I learned respecting Sanderson, and the question was,—How shall this man be brought to see his deplorable condition?

When the deer-stalker ascends the wild mountains with the object of shooting the timid roe, he finds the greatest caution necessary to accomplish his purpose. The red Indian, hunting the prairie buffalo, will lean on his gun, immovable as the stump of the tree, to allay all suspicion on the part of his intended victim. May there not also be benevolent stratagem? And is not this the only possible plan in some cases?

A child was made the means of opening the way which the two Primitive Methodists could not force. She was one of our Baillie-street scholars, a nice reader for her age, and could repeat a few hymns with good effect.

The old shoemaker came to my house, and, with much feeling, desired me to try and see Sanderson. He told me how he had treated the ministers, but earnestly besought that I would make an effort. After reflecting for a day or two on the best plan to adopt, I fixed on the Sunday-school child to open the way. The little girl often went to see

Sanderson, and I learned that he was very fond of her. I promised the child a present if she would learn well a short hymn, and afterwards go up to Mr. Sanderson's room and say it to him. She attended well to the directions I gave her, and about three in the afternoon went up to the sick infidel's room.

"Well, Alice, you are come to see your sick friend," observed Sanderson.

"Yes, I have learned a new piece, and am come to say it to you. Will you let me?"

Sanderson was quietly rocking himself in his arm-chair, with his foot on a small footstool, and his back towards the window. He took the child's book, saying,—“Now, then, be very careful and say it well; mind you do not miss one word.”

Alice stood before him, folded her hands, and in a full, clear voice, began:—

“When life's tempestuous storms are o'er,
How calm he meets the friendly shore,
Who died on earth to sin!
Such peace on piety attends,
That where the sinners's pleasure ends,
The good man's joys begin.

“See smiling patience smooths his brow,
See the kind angels waiting now
To waft his soul on high;
While, eager for the blest abode,
He joins with them to praise the God
That taught him how to die.

“The horrors of the grave and hell,
Those sorrows which the wicked feel,
In vain their gloom display;

For he who bids the comets burn,
And makes the night descend, can turn
His darkness into day.

“No sorrows drown his lifted eyes,
No horror wrests his struggling sighs,
As from the sinner’s breast ;
His God, the God of peace and love,
Pours sweetest comforts from above,
Then takes his soul to rest.”

When the child had finished the hymn, Sanderson handed her back the book, and quietly said,—“That will do, you may go down and take Fox with you ; I want to have no company for the present.”

I sought an early interview with the child. On asking what Sanderson said, her artless answer was,—“He put the book on his face, *and I think he cried.*”

The following day, while the sick man was pacing his room, he found a tract on one of the chairs : he took it up, read a few lines, sat down, and read it all. He knew a great part of it to be true ; with most of the circumstances narrated he was acquainted. Some events connected with the death of a man in the same street were such, that it had been thought advisable to publish them. Sanderson knew the man, had heard much about him, and was anxious to know more. He called his wife up stairs, and asked her how the tract had got into his room. She answered that “Mr. Ashworth had been giving them out amongst the neighbours, that she had read it, and thought it would interest him.”

“Did John Ashworth request you to place the tract in my room ?” he asked.

“He did ; he often asks about you, and says he should like to come and talk politics with you.”

"Well, go and tell him that if he can come this evening, and tell me who wrote the tract, and talk politics as you say, I shall be glad of his company."

Mrs. Sanderson immediately made me acquainted with her husband's request, and that evening I paid him my first visit. After satisfying him respecting the authorship of "Poor Joseph" (the title of the tract), he immediately asked what I thought of the Catholic Emancipation Bill; "for," said he, "I have been reading on the subject."

I replied, that "governments had grievously mistaken their proper and legitimate jurisdiction in meddling with such subjects, from Constantine downwards; that Caesar and God could never be brought together by acts of parliament; that the true province of government was to secure the civil rights of all; neither to smile nor frown on any sect or creed, but treat them all alike;—that if this plan had always been adhered to, neither Popery, Protestantism, nor Dissent would have been heard of; and that contentions for supremacy would never cease until this simple remedy was adopted." Our conversation lasted until late, and I left without making any direct reference to religion.

Some may think that I was trifling,—may be disposed to blame me, and ask,—"What if he had died that night; died in his sins; died rejecting mercy! how could you have reconciled your conscience in neglecting a plain duty?"

My answer is, I did not think he was so far gone in consumption, but that he probably would still linger for many weeks or months; and, also, I thought I was taking the most likely measures to accomplish my object. For several nights I went to see him, and had long and interesting conversations on various subjects, but still left as at first,

On taking up my hat to leave, on the sixth evening, he was walking to and fro. He, as usual, put out his hand to bid me good night, but the grasp was firmer and much longer than before. He looked me full in the face, and said, with a trembling voice,—“Mr. Ashworth, how is it that you never speak to me about my soul?”

“Why, Sanderson, have you got a soul?” I said.

He let go my hand, and began again to pace the room. I still stood with my hat in my hand, but under the most intense excitement. Now, I thought, the next word he speaks will reveal the inward workings of his mind. With his finger he pointed to the chair from which I had just risen, evidently wishing me to be re-seated. I obeyed in silence. Still walking about the room, he took out his handkerchief, and putting it to his face, he groaned out at last with a choking voice—

“O, Mr. Ashworth! Mr. Ashworth! I am a miserable man. That child’s hymn, and ‘Poor Joseph,’ have crushed me to the dust! I have held out as long as I can; whatever must I do?”

O, what joy sprang up from my soul in an instant! “Whatever must I do?” from the broken-hearted infidel, was music to me; yet I could not speak one word for several minutes. We wept together. At length I said,—“Thank God, Sanderson, that question has not come too late! there is an answer, and there is but one. O, my dear friend, if scepticism, if infidelity could make a man happy, I should have been happy at one period of my life; but it never did; it never can. It is a gloomy, blighting, blasting, withering curse, and makes its dupe a miserable living lie, and sinks him lower than the brute. The magnificent heavens, the earth bespangled with ten thousand tints of

beauty, and the deep solemn ocean, speak with a voice that would almost impress the solid rock. The very dust under the infidel's feet mocks his credulity : every atom has its purpose. The wonderful harmony and adaptation of the physical universe strikes the observer with awe. God's material world displays His physical government. God's revealed Word unfolds His moral government ; and there we find that reconciliation, union, and communion with God are absolutely necessary to secure the happiness of man. Man, forsaking God, lost peace ; man must return to God, or remain miserable. Our redemption through Christ opens the way, and this is the answer to your question,—‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’”

While I was speaking, the poor broken-hearted penitent covered his face with his hands ; the tears dropped through his fingers, and, with the greatest earnestness, he requested me to pray with him.

There are periods when the most eloquent language is a very feeble representative of the soul's workings ; emotions too deep for words choke the utterance. Such was the moment when Sanderson and I knelt down to pray. But if prayer be the soul's sincere desire, we prayed ; if it be the simplest form of speech, we prayed ;—prayed for the stricken, sorrowing, agonizing, groaning sinner, pleading the invitations and promises, pleading the shed blood of a crucified Saviour as sufficient to save a million worlds. The arrow of conviction was deep in the penitent's soul, but his new-born faith was yet too feeble to reach the only hand that could extract it.

For several days Sanderson remained under the lashings of a terrified, guilty conscience, still wrestling for pardon

and peace. But the moment of deliverance came. Sanderson was on his knees : the earnest cry,—“O God, for Christ’s sake, blot out mine iniquities, and save my poor, guilty soul,” burst from a heart of anguish. Those words were the sublime strain that reached the Majesty on High ; the swift-winged messenger of reconciliation, with the still small voice, whispered,—“Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace.”

Sanderson rose from his knees a new man ; he was now unspeakably happy. Heaven had supplanted hell ; his enraptured soul burst forth in praises and thanksgiving. The change made a noise in the neighborhood ; his old acquaintances reported that he was wrong in his head ; and, if they were right, he was wrong, for they were wide as the poles asunder. He sent an apology to the two ministers he had insulted, shook hands with old Philip, the shoemaker, and for several months tried to undo the injury he had done, by speaking to old and young of the power of saving grace. Reading the Bible was his delight, and many passages in the New Testament he committed to memory. He was now a happy man.

Sanderson’s change of heart had such an influence on his health, that great hopes were entertained he would entirely recover. He often expressed his convictions that “if anything could give a sick man a chance of being restored to health, peace with God through Jesus Christ would ; for a happy soul would do much towards strengthening a sickly body.” His recovered strength enabled him to attend the house of God, and no man in Rochdale more enjoyed the means of grace. The songs and prayers of the sanctuary, and the glad tidings of salvation through a preached gospel,

filled his soul with deep emotion. He sought the company of religious men, and spent many pleasant hours with the old Christian shoemaker. The Bible was his constant companion, and he committed to memory the hymn he first heard repeated by little Alice. He often wished he had been converted when young, that he might have had the pleasures and labours of a godly life. All fear of death was gone, and he felt a desire to live chiefly that he might do some good in the cause of God and the Church. But it was otherwise determined ; for, being caught in a heavy shower of rain, he took a severe cold, and soon became unable to leave his bed.

I was much with him during his last sickness. Early one fine Sabbath morning, just before leaving the town to fulfil my engagements at Littleborough, I called to make what I believed would be a farewell visit. He was raised high in bed, with several pillows behind to support his now sinking frame. He smiled feebly, reached out his thin clammy hand, and, in a whisper, quoted three lines from the child's piece,—

“ See smiling patience smooths my brow,
See the kind angels waiting now,
To waft my soul on high.”

and then asked if I was going to preach somewhere.

“ Yes,” I answered ; “ morning and afternoon, at Littleborough.”

“ Will you let me find you a text, and, if you do not preach from it to-day, will you preach from it as soon as you can ?”

Hear, ye ministers of the cross, what sort of texts dying men wish us to preach from !—“ This is a faithful saying,

and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief." This was dying Sanderson's choice, and he especially wished me not to leave out the last words, "Of whom I am chief."

In a few hours, the soul of this chief of sinners, saved by grace, took its flight across the border-land, to join a Magdalene and a Saul of Tarsus in singing the praises of redeeming love.



WILKINS.

WHEN Hunt and Cobbett were England's heroes, almost worshipped by millions, and greatly feared by thousands ; when "the cause for which Hampden died on the field, and Sidney on the scaffold," was printed on our milk-cups, butter-plates, banners, and pocket-handkerchiefs ; when white hats, turned up with green, constituted the patriot's badge of allegiance to liberty and midnight meetings ; when Tories believed that England's death-knell was tolling, and Radicals that her sun of hope was just rising ; then Wilkins, the subject of this Tale, was a strong and active man. The excitement of the times led all parties into the most ridiculous follies ; the pulpits warned the people against politics and demagogues, and mob-meetings warned them against tyrants and parsons. Extremes always beget extremes, and Wilkins was one of the extreme men of that day. Had any one proposed that all parsons should be hanged, Wilkins would willingly have provided the rope.

The doings of any age can only be judged correctly by the light of that age. Wilkins, no doubt, believed he was doing what would secure his country's freedom ; but he fell into the snare that has entangled thousands,—he began reforming on the wrong side of the door ; the world *within* was neglected for the world *without*. He could shout for a nation's reform, while he neglected to reform himself. The stump

orator could find in him a seconder, and he was always ready to take the chair for the infidel lecturer. He was one of a large circle of free-thinkers ; and freely and bitterly did they both think and speak against any one who dared to think differently from themselves. Some of them declared it to be impossible that any man thinking the Bible true could be a free-thinker ; free thinking consisted in thinking as they thought, and thinking nothing else.

One of these worthies once tauntingly held up a purse filled with silver, and sarcastically quoted part of one of Wesley's hymns,—

“ This, this is the God I adore,
My faithful, unchangeable friend.”

Several years after a friend informed me that this same man was in great poverty ; he had never been married, lived alone, was in very poor health, and in great destitution. I had considerable respect for him, and, on calling to see him, playfully asked him if his god was still alive. He instantly remembered the purse and the two lines of the hymn, and smilingly replied, “ No, no ; he is dead long since ; I wish he was not ; but I am not the first that has worshipped a money-bag.”

Another refused a book I wished to lend him, observing, that he “ wanted neither me, nor my books, nor churches, chapels, bibles, parsons, nor cant.” It was about one o'clock one Sunday afternoon ; he was scraping a calf's hoof with a rusty knife ; he had a week's beard on his face, a week's dirt on his shirt, clogs that seemed never cleaned, and trousers covered with various coloured patches. The house, the wife, the children, all indicated anything but domestic comfort.

"Well," I replied, "I admire your frankness; you hoist your colours at once. I expect you are one of the men that 'want more pigs and fewer parsons.'"

"You have just hit the mark," was his answer.

"Well, sir," I said "but observation convinces me that men of your creed, or rather no creed, have rarely either pigs or parsons; and I have also observed that godliness, as a rule, gives a man the advantage and pleasure of this life; it has given to millions a comfortable house, a good character, a good suit of clothes, respectability, a place in God's house, a happy mind, and glorious prospects." Then turning to the wife, I added, "Mrs. —, suppose that your husband was a religious man, that you were well dressed, as you see nearly all that go to church or chapel are, leaning on your husband's arm, and your children, neatly attired, walking on before to the house of God, how would you like it?" With a good hearty laugh, she turned to her husband and said, "Harry, I should like to try." Harry and I subsequently became good friends; he now reads my books and has got new trousers.

Many such as the above were amongst Wilkins' *free-thinking* acquaintances when I first saw him. He had a sort of leadership among this class of men; he was superior to them in intellect, and in better circumstances; he was an extensive reader of infidel works and "ultra" newspapers; talked large, scoffed at religion, and boasted that for thirty years he had never entered either church or chapel. How it was that I became so anxious respecting this man's salvation all at once is to me inexplicable, except on the Bible principle, that God's Spirit moves human agency to effect His purposes.

On one occasion, when Wilkins was passing down the

street, a co-worker in the school and church, Mr. Thomas Schofield, called my attention to him, observing that he supposed he was a strange character, and wondered if it was possible to get an interview between him and our mutual friend, Mr. Molineux. I at once saw the possibility, and believed it was my duty to do what I could to get them together. Feeling considerable confidence in the result, I went at once to Mrs. S——, one of Mr. Wilkins' married daughters, and requested her to propose the matter to her father. She was amazed at the idea, and, in evident surprise, asked if I did not know her father's principles.

"Yes," I answered, "but if you propose the thing to him in as agreeable a way as you can, perhaps you may succeed better than you expect."

"Well, but if he gets angry with me, as I am certain he will, I shall have to lay all the blame upon you."

"Very well; I will cheerfully bear all consequences, whatever they may be," was my reply.

Mrs. S—— went to her father's house that night, and told him the strange request that I had made, and, as she expected, he was greatly offended. The following day he called at my shop, and demanded why I had presumed to speak to his daughter respecting him, and whether I supposed that he was incapable of judging for himself in matters relating to his own welfare.

I saw he was greatly irritated, and knew that much depended on the next minute. I handed him a chair, requested him to be seated, offering, at the same time, to take his hat and walking-stick. He took the seat with evident reluctance, but refused to give his hat, and held the stick in a manner that indicated a wish on his part to use it.

I at once confessed that I had requested his daughter to

speaking to him ; told him how the thought had arisen ; that I had known him ever since he was chairman at a lecture given by the notorious infidel, Carlisle, of Sheffield, in the old play-house ; and thus, having been a victim to the paralyzing influence of scepticism, I could feel for others carrying the same yoke. Here he interrupted me by sharply asking if I "wished him to be pestered with some young upstart that would cram damnation down his throat ?"

"No," I replied, "the man I wish to introduce to you is both a gentleman and a scholar. You have read much, are acquainted with some of the sciences, and know something of speculative philosophy ; and, religion apart, I think he is just the man to gain your highest esteem. If you wish to talk with him on geology, he will give you the strata from the primary, transition, secondary, tertiary, to the superficial ; if on astronomy, he will dilate on that wonderful science from Mercury on to Uranus, with satellites, comets, &c. ; if on botany, he will give you the names of flowers and plants, with their Latin names and English derivations, almost from the cedar on Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall. He has also travelled a little, and knows something of human nature ; and if you want to have your book-knowledge well rubbed up, he is just the man for you."

While I was speaking, Wilkins smiled, and observed, that he thought I was a painter in more respects than one ; that he should like to see the man I had so eulogised, if only through a telescope ; and, if he would leave out his religious twaddle, he might call upon him when convenient, but only on that condition.

"Well, then, I will undertake to see the gentleman, and frankly tell him of your wish and terms. I have no doubt the compact will be honourably kept on his part, but I ex-

pect you will break it yourself ; for you have been so long under the impression that you could prove all parsons fools, *par excellence*, that you will be trying your hand upon him."

"Parsons ! parsons ! is the man you have been speaking of a parson ?" exclaimed Wilkins, with evident astonishment.

"Yes, sir ; he has long been in the ministry, but is now superannuated by reason of age ; being, however, extensively known, he is still in great request as a preacher ; and though he is sixty-seven years of age, I would have you be on your guard, for he is an adept in stenography, and will be able to take down your words as you speak them."

This last sentence was spoken in a playful manner ; nor could I help laughing outright on seeing Wilkins' embarrassment, on discovering that the gentleman with whom he had promised to have the meeting was a minister ; and seeing, also, that this fact appeared to him somewhat to alter the state of the case, I offered to liberate him from the contract, providing he wished it.

"No, no," was his answer, "let him come, let him come ; you know the terms—no religious cant. If the bargain be kept, I shall be glad of his company ; and if he breaks the contract, he will not catch an old bird with chaff."

Those who know Mr. Molineux, will at once acquit me of having said too much respecting his general attainments. God in His word, and God in His works, were themes on which he could dwell to the instruction and edification of his hearers. I thought him just the man for the work in hand. The following day I made him acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, and was glad to find that he entirely agreed with the conditions. He promised to call upon Wilkins on the following Wednesday afternoon.

They met at the time appointed, and, by an agreement betwixt themselves, arranged for a weekly interview. Being two intelligent men, they had no lack of interesting subjects. For several weeks the conversation was on botany and politics, and, just as I expected, Wilkins was the first to break the agreement. He asked Mr. Molineux what he thought of the evidences of a First Cause. This question opened up a subject, the collateral bearing of which would necessarily include internal, as well as external evidences. Their opinions respecting some of the evidences did not materially differ; but when Wilkins declared that he could not reconcile the many absurdities and contradictions found in the Bible with the belief that it emanated from an infinitely wise Being, such as God must be, Mr. Molineux replied,—

“Have you found the absurdities and contradictions in your own reading of the Bible, or in books written against it?”

“O, in books written against it. I have never read either the Old or New Testament myself, thinking it a pure waste of time to do so,” replied Wilkins.

“Well, but if you refuse to read the Bible itself, in order to judge impartially, you should have read books in vindication of its truth and consistency,” observed Mr. Molineux.

“Yes, perhaps I ought; I have often boasted of thinking for myself; but in regard to the Bible and its teachings, I have allowed its acknowledged enemies to think for me. If, however, you have any books that profess to explain its absurdities and contradictions, that are worth reading, I should be obliged if you would lend them to me; and, as the New Testament is a small book, I will at once read it carefully through; but I have never been able to make

anything of your Jesus, as you call him, nor do I expect to do so."

Mr. M. furnished Wilkins with Bishop Newton's and Simpson's Key to the Prophecies, and other works, such as he knew would answer ; and, in the meantime, Wilkins, as he had promised, began to read carefully the New Testament, making notes as he proceeded. While seeking for contradictions and absurdities, he found what he was not seeking, and what he was not expecting to find. He found that the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword ; he saw that, if what he was reading was true, he was a lost man ; he found the truth crowding on his soul with such telling power that he could not sleep in his bed ; and he found himself on his knees in the dead of the night, bathed in tears, groaning for mercy, agonizing for pardon, beseeching God for Christ's sake not to send him to hell, not to cut him off in his sins, not to turn a deaf ear to the broken-hearted sinner, but in mercy to spare him, in mercy to blot out his transgressions.

In this state of mind he came to my house, requesting a private interview. How different was this visit from the one he paid me about two months before ! Memory and conscience—a guilty conscience—were working with a crushing power ; the events of his past life distressed and appalled him. His confessions, then and afterwards, were such as prudence would cover over with a veil of charity ; he was greatly troubled on account of having been the cause of others imbibing infidel principles. One case he mentioned as peculiarly distressing :—A dying acquaintance, whom he visited in his last hours, begged Wilkins to send for some good man to read the word of God and pray with him. Wilkins called him a fool ; told him to die like a man ; and

refused either to send himself for a praying man, or allow others. "O Wilkins! Wilkins!" said this wretched, miserable being, "Christians do not die as I am dying; this will never do; I do not now believe that death is an eternal sleep; I wish I could believe it; we have often called it a leap in the dark, but now to me it is dreadfully dark. You have often quoted Pope: reverse his dying Christian's address to his soul, and you have my wretched condition:—

"Hark! the fiends infernal say,
 'Come, lost spirit, come away.'
 What is this absorbs me quite,
 Steals my senses, shuts my sight,
 Drowns my spirit, draws my breath?
 O, 'tis death, eternal death!"

These words were amongst the last the dying man uttered, and the scene now passed afresh before the mind of Wilkins. With tears streaming down his face, he confessed that if he had read the Testament with candour thirty years sooner, he should have been a different man. On leaving, he took hold of my hand and said, "Mr. Ashworth, I do believe God could pardon my sins, but he never will."

At a subsequent interview he was more calm, but spoke with great force of the want of principle and virtue amongst infidel writers; greatly deploring his past life, and wishing he had earlier read the Bible and thought for himself. In this Wilkins was right; if infidels would remember that God's word enjoins upon all men to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good," and would compare the teachings of the Bible with the lives of those who have despised those teachings, many of them would be astonished at the company in which they are found. Voltaire and Rousseau both lived in open adultery; yet these are gods amongst in-

fidels. Paine was a drunkard and swearer ; Hobbes, Wharton, Shaftesbury, Woolaston, Chubbs, Bolingbroke, and Rochester lived strange lives, and were consistent with their own teachings. But an immoral teacher of Christianity would be condemned by his own creed. Voltaire confesses that "though the ministers of the Gospel oppose each other in their dogmas, in morality they are all agreed."

The iron had entered into Wilkins' soul ; the crushing consequences of infidel principles came upon him with all their force ; and he now stood before me a miserable, broken-hearted man. I advised him still to read on as he had begun ; to examine for himself ; to get as much as possible into private, and pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance, not doubting but he would find mercy.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "but how am I either to read or pray with any hope of pardon ! The thing seems to be impossible. O, sir, the fearful results of my teachings are more and more terrible as I now see them ! I have already given great offence by allowing Mr. Molineux to come and see me. I have sown the dragon's teeth in my family, and now they mock all my attempts to induce them to reconsider their position ; they sneer at me for reading the Bible, and declare their determination not to be frightened by religious bug-bears."

And this was true ; the family did all they could to prevent his intercourse with religious men. Mr. Todd, one of Wilkins' neighbours, a good old Christian, hearing of this, offered Wilkins his sitting-room, promising to read and pray with him fifty times a-day, if he wished it. Wilkins gladly embraced the offer, and spent a considerable portion of his time in Mr. Todd's house ; and there the venerable old Christian, and penitent weeping publican, together read

God's blessed word, and together bowed the knee at the throne of grace.

One evening, Mr. Todd, at Wilkins' request, came to ask me to spend the evening with him, if I could possibly spare time. It was a memorable evening: he had copied from the Bible many passages that seemed to destroy all hope that a man such as he was could ever expect to have forgiveness, and read them to me with a trembling voice. I met all his objections by one answer,—“He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” I held him fast to that one point,—“able to save to the uttermost.” He begged me to kneel down and pray for him; we, all weeping, fell down before our Maker; but how different the cause of our tears! Mr. Todd, the hoary-headed saint, wept for joy at the prodigal's return; Wilkins wept tears of sorrow and contrition, and before I could utter one word, he exclaimed, “O Jesus, Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on me! O Jesus, Jesus, how I have scorned and despised Thy very name, scorned and insulted Thy servants, mocked at Thy sufferings and death! Yet thou wast wounded, bruised, and afflicted for me; Thou didst die on the cross for me; Thou didst shed Thy precious blood for me, for me, for me; O Jesus, Jesus, Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, have mercy on me! Lord! I would believe; help Thou my unbelief. I know I have sinned in heart and life millions of times; but is there not mercy? Is there not mercy? O Lamb of God, have mercy on a poor guilty man!”

That night was to Wilkins a night of great bitterness. He spent the most of it in strong cries and prayers. He wept and sought, and at last found the grace of God through a crucified Redeemer. And, O, the joy that sprang up in

his heart when he found that his deeply-stained, guilty soul was washed in the blood of the Lamb ! For days he was in ecstasies. Praise, nothing but praise night and day—"Praise the Lord !" was his continual theme.

On our first interview after his conversion, Wilkins took hold of my hand, and, with an earnestness that astonished me, exclaimed,—“O how happy I am ! the blood of Christ can save a million worlds—He has saved me, the chief of sinners. By faith I saw him nailed on the cross for me ; in my heart I believed He died for me—that His blood was shed for me ; and now I am a sinner saved by grace ; and if Christ could save me, He can save any man out of hell ! I have had more real peace since I became a child of God than I ever possessed in all my days of sin.”

At a subsequent interview, he told me that he had been troubled on reading the passage, “We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad.” “If,” said he, “this be true, what must I do ? My life has been spent in the service of Satan ; I am now getting old, and I cannot do much for God in the time that remains. If we must be judged by works, what must I do, for I shall have nothing to show ?”

I replied that, of all God's doings, redeeming grace was the most amazing ; that a life of iniquity could, through faith in Christ, be pardoned ;—that a conscience laden with guilt, and wretched as hell, could be made the home of peace and joy ;—that grey-headed sinners could be made saints,—this far transcended all human conceptions. No doubt we are judged by works, but we are saved by faith. I know you will have little time left to show your faith by your works. You have been saved by the skin of your teeth ;—

you are a brand plucked from the burning ;—you have been brought into the vineyard at the eleventh hour, but you will have your penny, and for such great mercies you must wonder and adore.

Some time after, Wilkins wished to receive the sacrament. He desired that it might be administered to him in Mr. Todd's house, and that those friends might be present who had been with him in his conflicts with the powers of darkness. The day was fixed ; the friends were invited ; they came to join with their once guilty, but now pardoned brother, to commemorate the most momentous of all events,—to comply with the last injunction given by the world's Redeemer to His disciples on that night of nights, when the accumulated guilt of the whole human race centred on, and weighed to the ground His sinless soul ;—that night of nights, when, agonizing in sorrow and blood, "He heaved the mountain from our sinking world,"—"Do this in remembrance of me." "Yes, Lord, is the sad but grateful answer of His Church in the wilderness, we will remember that night of Thy sorrow, when Thou for us was stricken, smitten of God and afflicted ; we will remember that Thou wast wounded for our transgressions ; that Thou wast bruised for our iniquities ; that the chastisement of our peace was laid upon Thee ; that by thy stripes we are healed ;—we will remember that the bitterest of bitter cups was for us drained to its very dregs !"

It was a solemn and melting time. Mr. Molineux, with his grave and serious voice, pronounced the promise of our Saviour,—“Whosoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst,” and then read the impressive service. Poor Wilkins ! every eye was fixed upon him. He wept much, but not as he had wept

before. *Then* he wept tears of anguish ; *now* he wept tears of joy. He trembled as he took the cup ; a sense of his unworthiness almost overcame him ; but his joy was deep, his peace with God was now more complete, and from that hour he sought to “adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things.”

Sometime after the preceding events, Wilkins expressed his conviction that he should die suddenly. He thought an affection of the heart had set in, and he desired that, if it were possible, either I or Mr. Molineux should be present at his death. His earnest wish was, that the last words he might speak in this life should be “Blessed Jesus,”—and God, in His goodness, granted him his request. On entering his room on the last day of his life, he smilingly took my hand, and asked me to lift him a little higher. I complied with his request. He then turned his face to the wall, and, in a faint whisper said, “Blessed Jesus ! Blessed Jesus !” While this faint whisper was yet trembling on his lips, the spirit of the converted infidel entered the pearly gates of paradise, and might there vie with the thief saved on the cross, which of the two should loudest shout the praises of redeeming love.



THE DARK NIGHT.

As you ascend from the vale of Rochdale, on the western side, skirting the hamlet of Spotland, near the Moorlands, the valley opening to the right reveals the tops of Long Ridge and Knowl Hill. On the rising ground, near the summit of Long Ridge, stood a few white-washed cottages, and a farm called "Bank House." In this house the old-fashioned broad oak stairs once served as a pulpit for Mr. Wesley ; and, in a large field behind, Mr. Whitfield, surrounded by a crowd, gathered from hill and dale, poured forth his rolling eloquence with such mighty power, that the echo reverberated from the rocks on the opposite side of the valley. Many a rustic returned to his lonely homestead, long to remember the passing visits of these messengers of the Cross ; and though, in those days of moral darkness, the seed often fell on stony ground, still, in many places it produced lasting fruit. A spirit of inquiry pervaded the minds of the people ; the old, long-neglected family Bible was taken down from the dusty shelf. Twos and threes met together for prayer ; earnings and savings were dedicated to the building of houses where they might meet for the worship of God. Hundreds and thousands of churches sprang up amidst the rejoicings of the new-born myriads, the results of the revival of the eighteenth century.

In the valley betwixt Shelf Hill and Long Ridge, one of these rural temples was erected. Men and women, whose hearts God had touched, brought willingly their offerings; and on the day of its dedication, amidst tears of thanksgiving, the people shouted aloud for joy. And, from that day to this, the Sabbath morning brings groups of old and young from their scattered homes on the uplands, to join in the duties of the school and the worship of the sanctuary. The short and simple annals of these poor of the earth, but candidates for heaven, would undoubtedly be interesting; and one of them, who for many years had mixed with the happy gatherings of this school and church, constitutes the principal subject of this narrative.

There he comes, with his trembling step, his wrinkled but pleasing countenance, and his nicely combed grey locks; bending under the weight of years, and the effects of many sorrows, he leans heavily on his staff. See with what evident delight he once more enters the house of God; and as he slowly walks down the aisle to take his accustomed seat, the eyes of old and young seem to say, "Welcome, old Richard!" But Richard had once been young; his step had once been firm, his body erect, his countenance radiant with health and vigor, and, in the obscure hamlet where he resided, he "had stood in his lot." Hard had been his toil, numerous his bereavements, and many his tears; yet he lived an unobtrusive, useful, and happy man—for there is a depth in real, genuine piety, which the plummet of adversity can never fathom. A labouring man, with a sickly wife and a numerous family of small children, all depending on him to supply their daily returning wants,—manfully and unflinchingly struggling to obtain the bare necessities of life, at the same time careful to watch over

their morals, and train them for heaven—such a man is one of nature's worthies—one of earth's noblemen. How delightful when, after the toils of the day, "the saint, the husband, and the father," gathering his young charge around the family altar, reads to them out of the Holy Book, kneels with them at the throne of grace, pouring out his soul in thanksgiving to God for past mercies, asking for wisdom, that he may "command his children and his household after him!" Well might the bard of Scotland say :

"From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs."

With delight we hail the noble sentiment, and echo back—

From scenes like these old England's greatness comes !

If the angels that are sent forth to minister to those that shall be heirs of salvation,—if those swift-winged messengers of mercy ever halt on their glad journeys through the skies, surely it will be to look on one of these bright spots, where the sons of toil, bowing down before the Eternal, gather for themselves and little ones the rich harvest of heaven's blessings.

One evening in autumn, when Richard was offering up his evening sacrifice, he was led to pray earnestly for his numerous family ;—that not one of them might miss the way to heaven ; that through all the temptations which they might have to pass,—through all the troubles and dangers of the wilderness, not one of them should be found straying in forbidden paths ; and that, after the storms of life were over, they might all be gathered into the heavenly fold of the Good Shepherd, never to part again.

Reader, mark that night's prayer ! Richard prayed that the whole might ultimately meet where there is no more parting. Shall they go before ? or shall they follow ? Shall

the shaft of death be thirteen times hurled, laying them one by one dead at his feet, and he, in the bitterness of his spirit, exclaiming, "I shall go unto them, but they shall not return unto me?"—or shall he be the first to go, and hail them, one by one, as they enter the gates of Paradise? God often answers our prayers; but God's mode of answering them we must leave with Himself.

During that night's devotion, Ellen, their eldest daughter, a fine young girl of eighteen, was much affected, and, after the younger children had retired to rest, she wept bitterly. On recovering herself so as to be able to speak, she said,—
"O father! I shall soon be gathered to that fold you have been praying we may all one day reach. I shall be the first to go. I feared to tell you and mother, knowing you have enough to bear, but I cannot longer hide the truth: I feel I am fast sinking into an early grave."

The anguish of that night Richard long remembered. The bitterness of death,—the death of his firstborn,—the mother's stay and the father's joy,—to be smitten down at the moment of her greatest promise, how agonizing the thought! Yet this very thing had been feared, and all available means devised to prevent it. For several months the parents had held anxious counsel respecting Ellen's altered looks; but when the child herself confirmed their painful suspicions, the stroke fell with crushing effect. This was the first stroke, but not the last, that Richard was destined to feel.

Ellen's case soon became hopeless. Consumption, that insatiable monster, which knows no mercy,—that insidious foe, that comes by stealth, and lays its fatal finger on its fated victim, leaving, by the touch, the bright eye, the hectic flush, the hollow cough, and the morning sweat;—

consumption, that greedy, tantalizing, but certain destroyer, which annually sweeps into the grave its tens of thousands, had selected Ellen for its prey. And now were to be seen the fruits of Sunday-school instruction and of piety at home. Step by step as she neared the tomb, the fear of death departed,—so wonderfully does God adapt His grace to the altered circumstances of His children. Never yet was dying strength withheld from dying saints. The Christian in his walk through the valley of the shadow of death, finds that to him it is but a shadow. Millions of redeemed have entered this valley smiling,—God's presence chasing away all their fears, and imparting unspeakable joys. Millions of dying Christians, since the days of St. Paul, have been able to appropriate some of his last words,—“There is laid up for me a crown.”

Sunday-schools have many trophies. Sowers in tears and reapers in joy are far more numerous than falls to the lot of mortals to know ; and though Ellen first learned to lisp the name of Him who said,—“Suffer little children to come unto me,” on the spot where children ought first to learn—her mother's knee—yet the school had been to her a happy place, and to many of her class-mates the house of mercy. One Sunday the teacher received a message requesting that she would bring with her all the scholars of the class in which Ellen had spent many peaceful hours, that she might see them once more. The teacher communicated Ellen's wish to her young friends. The books were closed in silence ; a tear stood in every eye. Two and two, headed by their kind teacher, with hearts of sadness, they wended their way to the house of death ; weeping, they gathered round her bed. Did Ellen weep ? No. The young, the healthy, and the strong, through their blinding tears, beheld the wasted

form of one they all loved, her pale countenance radiant with raptures of holy joy ; and while, at her request, they all kneeled down, and their sobs drowned the voice of the teacher engaged in prayer, still Ellen did not weep. She clasped her thin, white hands, and smiled ; and when at parting they one by one took her clammy hand to say the sad "Farewell !" still she smiled, and, in a feeble whisper, said,—“I die in peace ; meet me in heaven.”

Richard's day of mourning had now begun ; bitter were the tears he dropped on Ellen's grave. And how soon that grave was to be opened again and again ! But the grace that shone conspicuous in the pilgrim's life well sustained his burdened soul. Murmuring is seldom, if ever, found in either the heart or life of the sincere Christian. Mourning is the lot of many ; Jacob mourned for his long-lost Joseph : the wild lament of David over his ungrateful son Absalom has melted many hearts. Mary and Martha agonized over their brother's death ; and the Son of God Himself shed tears,—“Jesus wept.” Murmuring is often sinful ; mourning, especially when we are bereaved of those we love, is proper and natural. Richard never murmured, but was often made to mourn.

The next that entered the dark portals of “the house appointed for all living” was Richard's partner. Long had she been feeble ; she had inherited the fatal malady that had cut down her first-born from her parents, and entailed it on her own offspring. Then followed another, and another, until, out of twelve, only one daughter was left. Yet these multiplied sorrows gradually tended to enrich and mature Richard's piety ; his mind was staid on God, and that peace which the world can neither give nor take away was his increasing inheritance. His Christian experience was riper

and richer than that which many of his brethren possessed. Every sorrow cuts a string by which we are tied to this world, and leaves the soul greater power to soar towards the world to come. None, amongst the many that attended the house of God, seemed to enjoy the preaching of the gospel to the same extent as he did. The words of those sweet hymns that point the soul heavenward he sung in rapturous joy. We repeat, there is a depth in genuine piety which the plummet of adversity can never fathom.

But this plummet was yet to sound deeper. Richard was now becoming an old man ; he could not regularly follow his daily work. Small, indeed, had been his earnings ; but now the time was come when he must become dependent on his only child. He removed to a small cottage nearer the mill where she worked, expecting, as he said, there quietly to end his days, and be buried with his wife and children. Alice, the last and only child, was now a fine young woman, twenty years of age ; she was good looking, and seemed the most healthy of the family. Up to about eighteen years of age, Alice had been regular at the Sunday-school, and constant in her attendance at divine service. She knew the way of truth, and had the highest respect for the truly religious. She was, like thousands of the young in our Sabbath-schools, almost persuaded to be a Christian, yet felt she was not one. She was, like the scribes who came to Jesus, not far from the kingdom of God, yet she was not of the kingdom. She knew that religious paths are the paths of peace, but had not entered those paths. She knew that there is one thing needful, and sometimes prayed that she might obtain this one thing, but did not obtain it, because she did not earnestly seek for it. O ! how many live in this lingering state of comparative unhappiness for want of becoming

decided ! “When thou *seekest me with all thine heart*, then will I be found of thee,” is the teaching of God’s word. We cannot serve God and the world.

When Alice was about seventeen years of age, several of her school-mates, in the same condition of mind as herself, agreed to meet together for reading the Scriptures and prayer. These meetings greatly tended to strengthen their faith. Christ’s conversation with Nicodemus, as recorded in the third of John, was the subject on one occasion ; and our Saviour’s words,—“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” first took hold of Alice’s heart. She saw that to be born of the flesh was one thing, and to be born of the Spirit was quite another thing. The last verse of the chapter,—“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,” caused a ray of hope to spring up in her soul. She saw the Saviour hanging on the cross for her—stricken, smitten, and afflicted for her ; she saw His crown of thorns, His pierced hands and feet, His blood shed for sinners ; and heard His cry,—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” By the eye of faith she saw the whole scene on Calvary. Over and over she repeated the words,—“Was this for me ?” For a moment, but only for a moment, doubt and darkness clouded her mind : she feared God would not save her,—that she was lost ; but the words,—“He came to seek and to save that which was lost,” brought renewed confidence. Again she prayed ; and now was able to say —“His blood was shed for me.” Her sorrow was turned into joy ; and now, being justified by faith, she had peace with God.

From that day Alice was a new creature in Christ Jesus. She was now born again of the Spirit ; she had now obtained the pearl of great price—the one thing needful ; she was

now of the kingdom ; now, by the grace of God, she was a Christian ; and though, at times, doubts arose, yet she found that faith and prayer invariably dispelled them. Her peace, as a whole, was solid and great. She had become a decided Christian, and, as a consequence, enjoyed the real consolations of religion ; for it is the doubting and undecided who are strangers to the deep things of God, to the true riches—the real joy of saving grace.

Alice had always loved her father, but now her affection seemed to increase. And so it is ; the more we love God, the more we love each other. She it was who so nicely combed old Richard's grey locks—who looked so well to his personal appearance—who kept their little cottage so neat and scrupulously clean. On the Sabbath morning she rose early, and by school-time father and daughter were ready. All weathers they might be seen ; the old man leaning on his staff, and often on the arm of his dutiful daughter. They had a smile for everybody ; and many that saw them expressed their gladness that Richard was so comfortable in his old days. Richard's place in the school was with a class of little boys. Long and patiently did he talk to them of good things, helping them to spell out their words, and encouraging them by saying,—“ You will some day be good readers.” Alice occasionally taught a class of young girls, but more frequently joined her friends in the Bible-class.

To Richard and Alice the Lord's-day was indeed a day of holy duties and holy pleasures. God, in his mercy, gave the day to man and beast ; to both it was given as a day of rest ; but to man it was something more—a day of holiness to the Lord. They who spend this day in indifference, or in seeking what they call recreation, are utter strangers to these deeper and more lasting joys, only experienced by those who

can say,—“I was glad when they said, Let us go up to the house of the Lord.” And happy will be the day for the Christian church when all its professors, with all their households, shall willingly consecrate the day to Him who says to all,—“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”

As you leave the valley in which the chapel stands, travelling due west, at Shepherd Mill you cross a brook, gathered from the mountain rills ; and as it meanders down the vale, supplying the woollen bleach-works and cotton-works, it ultimately joins Bamford Brook, and finally empties itself into the river Roach. Blackpits Mill, where Alice worked, stands on the banks of the stream.

One winter's evening, old Richard, as usual, was preparing the meal for Alice on her return. He had put some fresh coals on the fire, and poured hot water into the tea-pot. On a small round table, covered with a white cloth, stood the cups and bread and butter ; the candle was burning on the mantelpiece. That night the little cottage bore the aspect of peace and cheerfulness. “I like,” said the old man, “to have everything as comfortable as I can for my Alice when she comes from her work.”

The mill had stopped, and the hands were returning home in groups. The night being dark, care was required in passing between the reservoir and the brook. Alice, hastening to get home, took a wrong step. One wild scream ! a plunge ! another wild, smothering scream ! and the deep, dark waters rolled over the body of poor Alice ! Lights, and ropes, and drags, and every available means to save her were instantly brought to bear ; and while the flickering torches, borne by many hands, cast their reflecting light on the deep waves, groups of weeping friends stood round the sad scene ; and when at last the body was found, and laid on the bank, it

was evident to all that her soul had fled. THAT DARK NIGHT ALICE WAS DROWNED !

Poor Alice !

In thy sad home thy aged father waits,—
Waits for his only child's return ; for thee
He waits, to greet thee with a ready smile.
Oft hast thou sweetly joined with him in walks
Of gladness to the house of prayer ; and oft
Bent lowly down before the throne of grace,
And sought for daily strength from heaven to meet
All coming ills. But now, alas ! thy own
Short day of work is done ; angels of light,
From the dark waters of the fatal deep,
Have borne thy spirit home.

Who now shall tell old Richard the dreadful tale ? Who, of the many scores on the river bank, will find nerve to tell the dreadful tale ? “ Who will tell her father ? ” was the question put by many of the weeping, sobbing friends. A brother of the church, with trembling heart, undertook the painful task.

On arriving at the cottage door of old Richard, he stood for some time perfectly unmanned. At last he gently lifted the latch. The old man sat in his arm-chair, with his back to the door. When he heard the door opened, without turning his head, he said, “ Alice, my child, you have been long in coming to-night.” This caused the sorrowful bearer of the melancholy announcement to burst out in weeping ; he was unable longer to control his pent-up feelings. Richard rose from his chair, looked his friend in the face, and exclaimed, “ O, tell me what is the matter !—whatever is the matter ? Has something happened to my child ?—do tell me ! ” With choking voice, the good brother begged the old man to be seated. “ Richard,” said he, “ pray for

strength ; my dear brother, pray for strength ; the Lord help you, your Alice is drowned."

"Drowned !—Alice drowned !—my child drowned !" Reason reeled, and consciousness mercifully left him ; and before the dead body of his daughter reached her once happy home, kind friends had carried to his bed the unconscious old father.

That night was a night of lamentation and weeping, and as the mournful intelligence spread, a wail of sadness rolled over the valley ; for although everyone that knew Alice believed she was prepared for the change, still they felt it to be a distressing event. She was loved for her own sake, and additionally loved for her kindness to her aged father. "Poor old Richard, what will he do now !" was the general exclamation. But nowhere was the sorrow so deep as at the church meeting, from which Alice was seldom absent, and, had all been well, she would that very night have made one of the happy company. That was indeed the house of mourning. The usual singing was dispensed with, but the minister read out old Richard's favourite hymn,—

"God moves in a mysterious way."

Then all knelt down in solemn prayer, and as they prayed they wept ; a beloved one had fallen from their midst, but if the militant Church counted one less, the Church triumphant numbered one more. How suitable to this event are the words of the following hymn !—

"When blooming youth is snatched away,
By death's relentless hand,
Our hearts the mournful tribute pay,
Which pity must demand.

"While pity prompts the rising sigh,
O, may this truth (impress

With awful power), 'I too must die !'
Sink deep in every breast.

"Let this vain world engage no more ;
Behold the gaping tomb !
It bids us seize the present hour,
To-morrow death may come.

"The voice of this alarming scene
May every heart obey ;
Nor be the heavenly warning vain
Which calls to watch and pray."

During that dismal night, several neighbours kindly attended to the decent requirements of the dead child, and the few wants of the feeble, afflicted father. For many hours he lay with closed eyes ; few words escaped his lips. He moaned in his sleep, and once or twice repeated the words,—“ Alice, you have been long in coming home to-night ;” and, before consciousness returned, his darling daughter’s remains, covered with a snow-white sheet, slept the sleep of death in the little chamber she had occupied as a bedroom while living.

When old Richard recovered his reason, he wept aloud for some time. When able to converse, he said,—“ Now I understand my child’s last prayer ; she always read the evening chapter, and, if I was not well, she sometimes engaged in devotion. ‘ Lord,’ she said, ‘ Thou hast taken my dear mother, and all my sisters and brothers, to dwell with Thyself in mansions above ; if it please Thee, preserve me for my aged father’s sake, that I may be a comfort and support to him in his declining days. But if otherwise be Thy will, then he will see us all safely folded in the realms of bliss, and he will soon follow, and then we shall be a whole family in heaven. O, help us both to say, Thy will be done.’ But

never did I feel it so hard to be resigned ; my cup is bitter indeed. It seemed as if the stroke might have been spared me. It is strange, very strange ! I would not judge the Lord by feeble sense ; but now this world is a wilderness—a waste, howling wilderness. She prayed—yes, my child prayed—that we might be able to say, ‘Thy will be done.’ Lord help me to say it ; for no doubt Thy will is the best, though at present I cannot see it. Job lost more in one day than I have lost in a whole lifetime, yet he could say, ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ O my God, help me to be resigned.”

The day of Alice’s funeral was a memorable one. Many of the hands in the mill where she had worked, together with the teachers and elder scholars belonging to the Sabbath-school, besides many friends and neighbours, followed her to the tomb. The old man, leaning on his staff and the arm of a brother Christian, headed the melancholy procession. Amidst tears and sobs, the body was lowered into the *devouring grave*, but with a sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection.

And now let us pause, lest we be led thoughtlessly to “charge God foolishly.” Ought not the Almighty to have spared this dutiful and affectionate child to be the comfort and help of her aged father, during the short time left for him in this world ?

Humanly speaking, Yes ; but it is humanly speaking. The finite can never understand the doings and purposes of the Infinite. There is great force in the words, “What we know not now, we shall know hereafter.” There are greater calamities than having those we love snatched from us by the hand of death. To see a son or daughter, day after day,

leading a wicked and ungodly life, would be far more distressing to a good man than having that son or daughter taken away by early death, knowing them to be prepared. Continual anguish of mind, consequent on seeing our children walking down to eternal death, is a thousand times worse to bear, than one great agony by their being taken suddenly to eternal life. Take the following case in illustration :—

Late one evening, a poor mother came to my door to consult me respecting her daughter, who for several weeks had left home, but had that day been found in company with a well-known wicked woman. I have never seen sorrow for the dead so really distressing as the anguish of that poor woman for her disgraced child. No pen can describe the agony of that mother as she said, “ O that I had buried her when she was a child. I would rather have seen her drowned or burned to death when she was sinless and innocent, than see her live a life of infamy. What must I do ! what must I do ! ” Such were the exclamations of this unhappy mother over her wicked daughter.

Another mother, who had lost her daughter by death, sat down in sorrow, refusing to be comforted, until one day, looking through the window, she saw a young girl in the hands of a policeman, being dragged to prison. From that moment her murmuring ceased, and she fell on her knees and thanked God that her child was in heaven, beyond the reach of misfortune, policemen, and prisons.

Another mother, who for more than twenty years had been almost in continual trouble in consequence of the conduct of a wicked son, seeing her neighbour weeping for the death of a young man the same age, said, “ I wish it was my son that lay in that coffin, instead of yours. To carry a

dutiful child to the grave is far less painful than daily to witness the misconduct of an ungodly one."

Old Richard was bereaved of his only remaining child, the stay and support of his old age. To the thoughtless it would seem a cruel providence. Jacob lost his son Joseph, and thought he must also lose Simeon and Benjamin. This made him cry out, "All these things are against me:" but as the design of heaven began unfolding, events showed that all things were making for him. To the good man who looks with the eye of faith—

"There is a light in yonder skies—
A light unseen by outward eyes;
But clear and bright to inward sense,
It shines,—the star of Providence.

'The radiance of the central throne,
It comes from God, and God alone;
'The ray that never yet grew pale,
The star 'that shines within the vale.'

And faith, uncheck'd by earthly fears,
Shall lift its eye, though filled with tears,
And while around 'tis dark as night,
Untired shall mark that heavenly light."

"All things work together for good to them that love God," but we must not forget that it is *all* things. Perhaps few passages of God's Word are to many so difficult of explanation as this, and principally because we do not include *all* things—things in heaven, and things on earth—the whole stretch of man's existence. Apparently unequal providences have perplexed thousands; the fat sinner, and the lean saint have caused many to think the ways of God unequal. They see the godly suffer bereavement and contending with poverty, and the wicked in prosperity and not

plagued as other men, and, as a consequence, faith sometimes staggers ; but it does not stagger in all, as the following incident will show. In relating the incident, I do not justify my own conduct in the affair :—

Several years ago, one hot summer day, on the old road leading from Rochdale to Bury, near the Oaken Road, a tall, thin old man had just laid down a heavy burden on a low stone wall at the road side. His burden was a large skip, full of course cotton “cops,” which he was fetching from Spodden Mill. As I neared the man, he was wiping the sweat from his bald head and face with a coarse cotton rag he had taken out of his pocket. Many times had I held delightful conversation with this old Christian : having had much forgiven, he loved much. Till nearly sixty he had lived without God and without hope ; when the change came it was a change indeed ; God’s providence, grace, and goodness were his daily themes. He joined the Church at Bamford, and, fine weather or foul, James was found in his pew. The moment I saw him, I determined to put his faith to the test.

“ Well, how are you to-day, James ? ” I inquired.

“ Very well, John, I am happy to say ; how are you ? ”

Just then a very costly carriage, drawn by two valuable horses, was passing. The only occupant of the carriage was a stout, red-faced gentleman : with arms folded, he was leaning back at his ease.

“ Do you know that gorgeous equipage, and the fat gentleman ? ” I inquired.

“ Yes, and so do you,” was James’ answer.

“ Well, and what do think of the Providence of which you sometimes speak ? You see yonder man ; you know he is an ungodly man, yet he spreadeth himself like a green

bay tree, his eyes stand out with fatness, he is not plagued as other men ; while you, believing that all the silver and the gold are the Lord's, serving Him, and trusting in His providence, are toiling and sweating in your old age for about seven shillings a-week, getting little more than bread and water,—how can you reconcile this with a just Providence ?”

James looked at me with amazement, and with the greatest earnestness, replied, “Are you trying me, John ?—are you trying me ? COUPLE HEAVEN WITH IT !—couple heaven with it, and then.”

Never shall I forget the old man's answer. Amidst the many sorrows through which I have had to pass from that moment to this, “Couple heaven with it,” has sweetened many a bitter cup.

Passing his house about three months after seeing him resting on the Bury Road, I, as usual, called to see him. Strangers were there ; and on inquiring what had become of old James, the answer was, “He is dead, sir, and buried in Bamford Chapel-yard.” In that burying-ground lay my own parents. I went to visit this, to me, interesting locality. On the grave of James the stone was laid, and, in letters newly engraved, I read, “Here resteth the body of James Lord, aged seventy-three.” As I stood over the grave, the hot summer day, the heavy burden, the sweating old Christian, the rolling carriage, and fat squire (since dead), all came fresh to my memory ; and from that grave the voice again sounded, “Couple heaven with it.”

“The sufferings of this *present time* are not worthy to be compared with the *glory that shall be revealed in us.*”

But to resume our narrative :—

The good brother before mentioned took old Richard to

reside in his own house. His remaining furniture was sold to pay a few small debts. On the following Sabbath morning, the old pilgrim, now alone, was again wending his way to the house of God. Kind, but mistaken friends, tried to dissuade him from going, thinking it would increase his distress of mind. "No, no," said the old man, "I have often had, like the Psalmist, hard things made plain in the sanctuary of my God. 'Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.' God will guide me with His counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. 'My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.' No, no; let me go to the chapel, for 'one thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.'"

Richard's appearance in the chapel that morning drew silent tears from most in the congregation; and when the minister offered up prayer that the aged brother might be sustained under his heavy bereavement, his voice trembled with emotion, and the sobs of the audience became general; every heart in that assembly said "Amen," to the prayer for their afflicted friend.

But another trial yet remained; the owner of Blackpits Mill died, and, in consequence, the works were stopped, and all the hands had to seek employment elsewhere. The good folks in whose house Richard for several months had found a shelter were amongst the number. He had the option of going to the parish workhouse, or receiving two-and-sixpence per week if he did not go into the house. He chose the two-and-sixpence; "For," said he, "if I go to the workhouse, I shall not be able to attend the chapel and other means of grace;—for that comfort is still left me, and an unspeakable

comfort it is. And, besides, if I go to the workhouse, when my short pilgrimage is ended, I shall be buried in a stranger's grave ; and I should like—O yes, I should like to be buried with my dear wife and children."

Another brother in the church, feeling commiseration for the now houseless old man, offered him a home. This poor man had nothing to spare, for he was a weaver, with a family of small children. Here Richard soon found he was a burden, and he would not consent to eat the children's bread ; and now there seemed no place left but the workhouse. For a whole week he was in much trouble. To leave the chapel to be buried in a stranger's grave, to remove from amongst those who had, according to their ability, shared with him and lightened his sorrows, was a sore and painful trial. Late on Saturday evening he remained long in prayer, beseeching the Almighty to open out some way of deliverance. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble. Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me. Lord, be Thou my helper." His struggle that night was severe and bitter ; but at last, from the depths of his afflicted soul, he was able to say, "Lord, not my will, but Thine be done. I leave my body, soul, and spirit entirely in Thy hands."

On the Sunday following, the day after Richard's prayer of resignation, I was unaccountably impressed with a desire to attend Bagslate Chapel, Richard's place of worship. I knew it was the school anniversary that day, but that was not, in itself, any attraction to me. The place was two miles from my house, and on that day—which was very unusual—I had no special engagement. I felt I must go, and after dinner I set out in good time, wishing to distribute a few tracts on the way. On arriving at the chapel, after shaking hands with many well-known friends, I found several of them

in trouble. On enquiring the reason, one of them informed me that old Richard was going to the workhouse, and was come to bid them farewell.

"Where is old Richard?" I asked.

"In the school-room, taking leave of the children," was the answer.

On entering the school-room, I found Richard alone, walking up and down; the scholars and teachers were all gone into the chapel. The old man seemed to be labouring under great mental anxiety. On seeing me approach, he held out his hand, saying, "This is my last day amongst you; I feel it hard work to part with my old friends, the means of grace, and the house of my God. O how precious to me has been the Sabbath-school and this blessed sanctuary! but the bitterness is past. Yes, yes, the bitterness is past; I now feel much more resigned to my lot;" and taking hold of my hand he prayed that the Lord might bless me, and make me a blessing.

"Well, Richard, but supposing you had three shillings a week, in addition to the two-and-sixpence allowed by the township—that would make five shillings and sixpence—how would that do?"

"Do! do! why I should be a king; yes, and far happier than any king. Do! I should think it would do, indeed."

"Well, then, you shall have it," I replied, "weekly, and every week as long as you live. And now you can remain with your friends and the school, and still attend the house of your God; and, when your days are ended, you can be laid down in the grave with your wife and children, as you have always wished."

Richard looked at me with tears streaming down his face,

and, with the most childish simplicity, said, "Mr. Ashworth, are you really in earnest, or are you trifling with an old man's sorrows?"

"In earnest, Richard, and never more in earnest; you surely do not think I could sport with your troubles."

For a moment the old man seemed unable to speak; then clasping his hands, exclaimed, "Now I see! now I see! If I had sooner left myself in the hands of God—sooner from my heart said, 'Not my will, but thine be done,'—deliverance would have come sooner. Not till last night could I say it; and my God sends deliverance the very day after. 'Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust.' 'O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.'"

"Well, Richard, but I think you had better not tell about this providential help; there may be prudence in not making it known."

"Tell! tell! but I must tell; I cannot help it. Was there ever anything like it? Just in time; a day or so later, and I should have gone!"

And tell he did; for, after the service was over, Richard was again shaking hands with his friends, exclaiming, "Bless the Lord, I am not going, I am not leaving you; no, no, the Lord has sent me help; I can come to His house still, and meet with you as long as I live, and then be buried with my own family. Praise God, for He has done it all!"

The following week was to Richard a week of great joy. He spent much of it in going amongst his Christian friends, talking with them about his deliverance, as he called it. To one brother in the church he said, "I wonder I was so unwilling to leave myself in the hands of God. I have long

believed that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice ; but somehow I did not like the workhouse, and I was very wishful to keep near the school and chapel. O this 'Thy will be done !' there is nothing beats it. My dear Saviour first spoke these words when sweating great drops of blood, and it seems that we must be made to sweat too, before we will say it. Prayers in sorrow are prayers in earnest. I have had a wonderful deliverance. I have now ninepence half-penny a day of an income, and I can make that do famously, and I will try never to doubt God's care for me again."

Richard's re-appearance in the school the following Sunday morning astonished some of the younger scholars,—they could not understand how it was that he had bid them farewell, and come back again. Richard knew their thoughts, and from his desk told them all about his deliverance. When he had finished, one of the little fellows called out, "That is good luck !"

For two years the old man regularly received the promised pension, several friends willingly contributing the amount required. This, in addition to many gifts, prevented him being a burden to the poor, hard-working man with whom he resided. As long as he could walk, either alone or with help, he attended the house of prayer. But the weary wheels of life were now on the eve of standing still. On my visit to him a few days previous to his death, I found him like a shock of corn ready to be gathered in, and, as he said, "his sun was setting in a clear sky."

"Well, well," said he, "you are come to see me once more ; I think it will be the last time. I do not know the persons that have so kindly sent me the money, but the Lord

knows, and He will bless them. I have been trying to think of the way God has brought me, and *now* I believe he has brought me to the right way. Many dark clouds have cast their shadows across my path. Dark, indeed, have been some of the nights of my pilgrimage, yet faith in the promises enabled me to see my way ; but the night my dear Alice was drowned was the darkest of all ; that was A DARK NIGHT. I have had many sorrows, but I have had millions of joys. Yes, Mr. Ashworth, taking all together, I have been a happy man. A few more hours, and we shall be *fourteen in heaven*. What a mercy, fourteen in heaven ! From my heart, I do *now* believe that ‘all things work together for good to them that love God.’ One day with my Saviour in heaven will compensate for all my sufferings on earth.”

Touch thy harp, pilgrim, thy end is now nearing ;
See, in the dark bosom'd cloud is a clearing ;
See, on the far height, a herald appearing,
Of brightness eternal !

Look to the mountain gleam, pilgrim of heaven ;
Sing, though around thee the tempest be driven ;
Soon shall the mantle of darkness be riven ;
Then what will thy glory be !

For the end of thy travel a loved One is caring,
And more than the half of thy burden is bearing, .
The cup of thy sorrow He sweetens by sharing,
And prepares thee another—

Of joys thus unmix'd, in thy glorious dwelling,
When thy harp the great chorus of harps shall be swelling,
And in songs of sweet rapture thy gratitude telling,
For thy househo'd in heaven.

It was, as Richard expected, our final interview. In his last moments he enjoyed unbounded peace, and his triumphant death was another evidence of the power of saving and sustaining grace.

He died at a place called Springs, and, at the request of his friends, the writer preached his funeral sermon, from the words, "BLESSED ARE THE DEAD THAT DIE IN THE LORD."

Richard had prayed that not one of them might miss the way to heaven;—that through all the temptations which they might have to pass—through all the dangers and troubles of the wilderness, not one of them should be found straying in forbidden paths; that, after the storms of life were o'er, they might all be gathered into the fold of the Good Shepherd, never to part again. Richard, thy prayer was heard!



JOSEPH ; OR, THE SILENT CORNER.

THE most melancholy part of the Church-yard is the Silent Corner, where lie the remains of our nameless ancestors. It is sad enough to be told by the "storied urn or animated bust," the polished granite or unpretending headstone, the names of departed friends ; but it is sadder still to look on that neglected spot—the pauper portion. There is no voice there. If the question be asked,—“ Who sleeps there ? ” we must wait till the sound of the last trump for an answer : then the dead, small and great, will come forth, and many from these obscure resting-places to a glorious resurrection.

In the last made burying-ground connected with old St. Chad's Church, Rochdale, near the iron palings that divide it from the highway, it is easy to distinguish the strangers' portion ; for, while the rest of the ground is covered with memorials, this part is as bare as the common, though very many are known to be interred there. Several of these were amongst my acquaintances, and one of them constitutes the subject of this narrative.

The little rural spot called “ The Wood,” on the banks of the Roche, near the old stone bridge, has long been a favourite resort of invalids. It has much the appearance of a private walk, and is free from the noise and throng of the streets. My business often leading me in this locality,

brings me into the society of, and frequently into conversation with, old and young, whom a fine summer's day will tempt to seek a little fresh air in this secluded place. One beautiful evening in May, a tall, handsome young man was leaning against one of the three stone posts that divide the walk in the wood from the field called Sparrow Hill. Everything about this young man was calculated to arrest attention. That he was poor was evident, yet he was scrupulously clean. He had a highly polished walking-stick in his hand, and a few gathered flowers, carefully arranged, on which he was looking with evident pleasure. His fine figure, intelligent countenance, and the unmistakable indications, to an experienced eye, that he was a doomed man, increased my desire to form his acquaintance.

"So, you are fond of flowers, I presume. I have heard it said that invalids see greater beauty in flowers than those in good health; is it so, my dear sir?" I asked.

"I think it is," he quietly answered with a smile; "but do you consider me an invalid?"

"That was my first impression on seeing you; but I shall be glad if I am mistaken, and am truly sorry if I have offended you."

"You are not mistaken, and I am glad you have spoken to me, for I am a very lonely young man, without one being in this wide world with whom I can converse on subjects nearest my heart, and which most engage my thoughts. I am very lonely, and very miserable."

"It ought not to follow that you are miserable because you are lonely," I replied. "There are some joys 'the sweetest when enjoyed alone.' But you surely have either relations or friends somewhere?"

"I have no relations that I know of. My father and

mother both died when I was young, and I never had sister or brother. I lived some time with my grandmother, but since her death I have been in lodgings ; for, not having the best of health, I have not been able to make myself a home. 'Twelve years I have worked in the cotton-mills,—here, in Burnley, and in Todmorden ; but for several weeks I have not been able to follow my employment, and now I am in a common lodging-house, with two shillings from the parish as my only support. I do not say this to induce you to give me anything, for I cannot beg. I have sold my better clothing at various times, and this has helped me a little ; but now I have nothing left that I can dispose of."

"In which of the lodging-houses do you reside ? for I should like to call and see you."

"Jack Smith's, in Packer Meadow, or King street ; but you will find it a queer place."

Promising to call and see him, with a mutual "good evening," we parted.

On the following evening I called, and learned from the landlady much about Joseph's circumstances. She informed me that he was a very conscientious young man ; that his means were exhausted, and she feared he did not get what was necessary for his poor state of health,—that he was quite friendless, and she often found him weeping, and in great sorrow. She was glad I had called to see him. After settling the question of lodgings, and making provision for a few nourishments for Joseph, I followed him into the *respectable room*, and found him nervously waiting me.

That night Joseph was greatly distressed. He mourned over his lonely and destitute condition. All his prospects were gloomy ; nothing but an early death in the workhouse was before him, and he wished he had never been born.

His condition was indeed a very painful one, and I felt much for the young man ; and having brought for him a few books, amongst which was James's "Anxious Inquirer," I left him, with a promise soon to call again.

At my next interview James entered into many particulars of his life, honestly confessing that much of his present misery was the result of his own folly. Speaking of his earlier days, he said :—

"The happiest period of my life was that spent in the Sunday-school. My mother was then alive, and she seemed anxious that I should early imbibe religious impressions. She regularly attended the church, and had a great regard for the Sabbath-day. She would read to me stories from good books, and many times prayed with me when father was not at home. I well remember how she began to look very pale when she heard the doctor tell her that she could not get better. That night was to me the beginning of sorrow. My father had died of brain fever, about six months before ; but somehow I had not cared much about him. One reason for this was my being so very young ; also my father's business took him often from home, and I had not much of his company. But the doctor's words to my mother, 'You cannot live long,' sound in my ears to this day. They were true words, for in less than three months I was an orphan. The day before mother died, she called me to her bedside to bid me farewell. I feel her clammy hand, and see her flushed face this moment. O, how well do I remember that night ! She spoke to me of heaven—told me what a glorious place it was, and that she was going there. She told me that, if God would let her, she would be my guardian angel, and take care of me. She presented me with her pocket Bible and her wedding-ring. She then requested me to kneel down,

while she offered up for me her last prayer. She put her hand upon my head, and with her dying breath, entreated the Lord to guide me in the path of holiness, and to save me from the temptations and snares so destructive to the young. She prayed that, sooner than I should live a life of sin, God would take me home to Himself while in my youth. She then again took hold of my hand, and made me promise never to leave the Sunday-school, never to neglect reading the Bible, and, lastly, to meet her in heaven. I promised her all she wished ;—from my breaking heart I promised her, and from the very depths of my sorrow-stricken soul I intended to perform all I promised. In six days after, leaning on the arm of my grandmother, I followed my dear mother to the grave.

“The first week I went to live with my grandmother I was sent to the mill to earn my daily bread ; and for four years I daily read my mother’s Bible, regularly attended the Sunday-school, and every day prayed that I might meet mother in heaven. But one fatal Sunday a terrible misfortune befell me. The teacher of our class was a very young man—very proud, and for the smallest offence he would strike our heads with the Bible. I was telling the boy next to me which verse he had to read, when the teacher struck my forehead with the edge of the Bible. In a moment he lay sprawling on the floor, and in a moment more I was in the hands of the Superintendent, being dragged up to the desk, exposed to the gaze of the whole school, and in ten minutes after publicly expelled. I was turned out of the door, and my cap thrown after me into the street ; and though the blood was running down my face from the force of the blow, yet I received not the slightest pity, but was

forever disgraced and branded by being turned out of the Sunday-school.

“ I went from the school to my mother’s grave, and seeing no one near, I lay down on the cold flag, crying, ‘ Mother, mother ; dear, dear mother, what shall I do ? I promised you never to leave the Sunday-school, but they have driven me away. I feel I have done wrong, and the teacher has done wrong,—what must I do ? ’ O, I wish some kind friend had taken me by the hand that moment, and led me back to the school. I would have done anything to have been once again in my place, for the sake of the promise I had made my mother. But I had no one to sympathize with me. I sat among the dead until it was dark, and then, sorrowfully, with aching head and heart, plodded my way home.

“ From that day I have felt myself an outcast ; for my grandmother was very feeble, and did not much care about me. I wished to go to some other school, but feared they would have heard of my disgrace, and object to take me, so I durst not apply ; and my Sundays, which had formerly been my greatest comfort, were now the days of my greatest misery. I soon became changed in my feelings, and felt that my heart was getting hard. I forgot to read my Bible, and soon after that went to bed without saying my prayers. About this time I met the young teacher that had struck me the blow. He put out his hand, wishing to be friendly, and invited me back to the school. Had he done this six months sooner, I should have been saved ; but now the arrow had entered into my soul, and all desire was gone. I excused myself by saying, that as my grandmother was now dead, I was removing to Burnley, where I expected to be able to get better wages. He expressed his regret at having struck me, and he said he feared he had been the

cause of my leaving the school. This softened me a little; but the week after I went to Burnley, and for six years have led a wild and dissipated life."

"How long is it since you came to Rochdale, Joseph?"

"About two years since. I worked eighteen months, but for the last six months I have been in very poor health, and have kept sinking, both in body, mind, and circumstances. I wish I had no soul, and then to die would be a blessing."

"What have you done with your mother's Bible and wedding-ring, Joseph?"

"I could not keep the Bible after I commenced a life of sin. I knew it condemned all my actions; and that I believe is the real reason why wicked men are ever trying to prove it a false book. But no part of that book is more true than that which points out the consequences of sin; it is terribly true, and they all know it. I purposely left mother's Bible in a lodging-house, and have sold the ring for bread."

"I feared your Bible would be gone, and have brought you another." On handing it to him, he carelessly opened it, and seeing the corners of four leaves all turned down to the same verse—Isaiah lv. 8,—he read the passage, and again closed the book, saying, "It is of no use, 'the harvest is past.'"

"You made your dying mother three promises, Joseph; first, that you would never leave the Sunday-school; second, that you would read her Bible daily. These two you have broken; but the third need not be broken,—you may meet her in heaven."

Joseph quickly rose from his seat, and turning his face to the window, burst into a convulsive weeping. I gently laid my hand on his shoulder, and whispered in his ear, "Christ

Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and quietly left the room.

The landlady, Mrs. Smith, informed me on my next visit, that for several weeks Joseph had coughed most of the night, and that the lodgers complained they could not sleep. Several of them left in consequence. She also informed me that she had cleaned out the room in the backyard, called the hen-cote, and made him up a small bed, for which she would only charge me half-price. She expressed her regret at having to remove him, but promised to do all she could to make him comfortable.

"And is Joseph in the hen-cote now?" I asked.

"Yes, sir; if you will come this way I will take you to the place, but you will think it a strange bed-room."

I followed her out of the back door into the yard, and in a very small one-story building found Joseph lying on his narrow straw bed. He told me he had been poorly during the day, and was forced to lie down.

I sat down on a three-legged stool—the only piece of furniture in Joseph's room—and, taking hold of his moist hand, asked him if he heard the words I softly whispered the night I left him weeping.

"Yes, I heard them; and they have been ringing in my ears ever since. I am greatly distressed. A few hours since, a little girl, belonging to a kind neighbour, brought me a basin of gruel, and said her mother told her to ask my permission to let her come and read for me. I could not refuse the little thing. She ran home to tell her mother, and was soon back with the Bible wide open at the 103rd Psalm, the place she was to read for me. While the child was reading, I thought my heart would have broken. It was my mother's favourite psalm, and the last I ever heard her

read. I burst out weeping, which seemed to frighten the child. She asked me were my mother was ; and when I told her she was dead, and gone to heaven, she asked me if I should go to heaven if I died ; but I could not answer. O, I wish I could."

"Well, Joseph, you surely see the goodness of God in all this. He has certainly sent that little girl to read the Bible to you, as He sent you a Bible to read. I am here, because, being His servant I must do His work. Everything is conspiring to lead you to the lamb of God. Joseph, my dear friend, do let His goodness lead you to repentance."

"I have very little faith," he replied, "in sick-bed repentance. It has long seemed strange to me that sinners should, with their eyes wide open, in the full blaze of gospel light, go on, step by step, down to destruction, knowing that every step they take brings them nearer and nearer, and when they get within a few steps of hell, scream out for mercy. It is a miserable trifling with God's goodness, and often a mockery ; for many that have been restored to health have proved worse than before. These being my views, how can I consistently hope for pardon in the eleventh hour? It is against reason."

"Almost all you say is true, Joseph, and your reasoning is, to a great extent, just ; but it leaves you hopeless. If your soul be lost, you will not be the first by thousands, that reason has damned. Man's salvation depends not on reasoning, but believing. 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;' 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved;' these are God's words, and this is God's plan ; and in this plan the amazing love of God is seen. By your reasoning you have shut heaven's door against yourself ; but believing will throw it wide open, and, through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, poor Joseph Sutcliffe may enter."

Joseph now became greatly agitated. He turned on his back in his narrow bed, and his eyes filled with tears, but for a considerable time he made no reply. At last, with a long-drawn breath, he said, "The thief on the cross ; O, that happy thief !"

"Did the thief reason, Joseph ?"

He paused a moment, heaved another long sigh, and clasping his hands, exclaimed, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

"Did the publican reason, Joseph ?" I again asked.

He made no reply ; but stretching out his long, thin arms toward the ceiling, his unbuttoned, ragged shirt-sleeves falling down, revealing his wasted condition, with trembling anguish he again exclaimed, "Lord, save, or I perish !"

I rose from the three-legged stool, and gently laying my hands on his forehead, said, "Did poor sinking Peter reason, Joseph ?"

His hands fell back, and with a look of despair, he sobbed out, "Is there mercy ? Is there mercy ? Happy thief ! Happy thief !"

"Look to the middle cross, Joseph. Take your eye from the thief, and look to Jesus, and hear his dying cry, 'Father, forgive them.'"

That moment I was hurriedly called away to Manchester. On passing through the house, I urged Mrs. Smith to see Joseph well provided for in everything he might require, and to send to my house for wine as often as needful. I went on my journey, and did not see Joseph again till the following day. About nine o'clock, little Rachel, the Bible-reader, came running to tell me Joseph wished me to go as soon as possible. I took the child's hand, and very soon we both stood beside the sick man in the hen-cote.

The first glance at Joseph's smiling and really happy-looking countenance revealed the glorious change that had taken place. He was indeed a new creature in Christ Jesus. He stretched out both hands, one for each of us, exclaiming, "What will my mother say? I shall now meet her in heaven! O, that I had the voice of a trumpet; I would proclaim to the world that 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.' I am the happiest man out of heaven."

"How and when did you obtain this pearl of great price, Joseph?"

"About five this morning. All night I prayed and sought mercy. I looked to the middle cross, and saw my dear Saviour bleeding and dying for sinners; and all at once I believed from my heart He would save me. That moment I felt an unspeakable joy spring up in my soul. O, the depth of God's love to sinners!"

"What do you think of reason now, Joseph?"

"Think of reason! why it is as blind as a bat in spiritual things."

"You said when I first visited you, that you wished you had no soul; are those your views still?"

"O, dear no. I feel now that to be a child of God, and have a glorious hope of dwelling with Him in heaven for ever, is worth more than the whole universe."

On returning home, and reflecting on the great change wrought in Joseph by the power of Divine grace, and feeling and believing that faith in Christ could effect the same change in every sinner in the world, I felt more than ever a determination to cry, "Behold the lamb!" Very many times, during the following six weeks, did I sit on the three-legged stool in the hen-cote, beside Joseph's narrow straw bed; but in no case have I witnessed so much unmixed joy.

His former readings of the Bible were now of unspeakable value. Long-forgotten passages of the promises came back with renewed force, and he seemed to bask in the sunshine of heaven. From being his teacher, I became a learner. He had been fond of poetry, and now that his imagination had become sanctified, many sublime thoughts and words flowed from his mouth. On one occasion he said, "I have been thinking of the difference betwixt the death of Paul and Byron. Paul said, 'The time of my departure is at hand ; but there is laid up for me a crown.' Byron said—

' My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flower, the fruit of life is gone ;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone.'

What a difference betwixt the last days of a scoffer and those of a Christian !"

On the last day of Joseph's life I read to him his mother's Psalm ; and in his last moments I moistened his parched lips with a little wine and water. The last sigh came, and with it two faint words, "Jesus—Mother."

"The beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom."

And the fatherless and motherless, sisterless and brotherless pauper died—died on a bed of straw, in a hen-cote ; and he too had his convoy of angels to carry him home from straw to glory.

On the day of Joseph's funeral, three kind neighbours assisted me in carrying him to THE SILENT CORNER. There was no one to follow his remains to their last resting-place. The tallest of the four bearers was the only one that was impressed with the sad scene.

In the grave of the pauper *he* let drop a tear,
But that tear was a tear-drop of joy.

MY MOTHER.

Just on the outskirts of Rochdale, on the side of the highway leading to Manchester, at a place called Sparth, there formerly stood a large stone table, supported by three thick stone pillars. Here, in by-gone days, country farmers brought their milk, and were met by their town customers with pitchers ; owing to this custom it was designated the Milkstone. Underneath it many a school-boy had taken shelter from the storm, and on the top of it many a weary traveller had laid down his heavy burden.

Amongst the many thousands that have made this stone a resting-place, two have to me a special interest.

One cold winter day, a young man was seen going from Rochdale towards Marsland Workhouse with an old man on his back : the young man's strength being exhausted, he set down the old man in a sitting posture on the Milkstone. While both were resting, the old man began to weep most bitterly. " You may cry as hard as you like," said the young man, " but to the Workhouse you shall go, if my legs can carry you ; for I will not be burdened with you any longer."

" I am not weeping because thou art taking me to the Workhouse, my son, but because of my own cruelty to thy grandfather. Twenty-five years since, this very day, I was

carrying him on my back to the Workhouse, and rested with him on this very stone. He wept, and begged I would let him live with me the few days he had to live, promising to rock and nurse the little children, and do anything that he could ; but I mocked his sorrow, turned a deaf ear to his cries and tears, and took him to the Workhouse. It is the thought of such cruel conduct to my poor, old, dead father that makes me weep." The son was amazed, and said—

"Get on my back, father, and I will take you home again, for if that be the way, my turn will come next ; it seems it is weight for weight. Get on to my back, and you shall have your old corner, and rock the little children."

One hot summer day, a poor woman was seen toiling up the hill called Fletcher Round, with a flannel "piece" on her back. A little boy was walking by her side. On reaching the Milkstone she laid down her heavy burden, and leaning on the "piece" for support, she wiped the sweat from her face with her checked apron. With a look of affection, the boy gazed into the face of his mother, and said,—
"Mother, when I get a little bigger you shall never carry another 'piece.' I will carry them all, and you shall walk by my side."

On that very day the painful fact flashed into the mind of that little boy that he was the poor child of poor parents,—the young son of a humble, toiling, kind, and affectionate mother. But as he grew bigger and stronger he redeemed his promise, and carried the "pieces" up Fletcher Round, and on to Mr. Whitworth's warehouse at Sparth, without calling at the Milkstone to rest. His love for his mother was deep and lasting ; and from his own pen we have the following sketch of her life,—the tale of "MY MOTHER."

The impression made on my mind, on that hot summer

day, while my mother was resting and wiping the sweat from her flushed face, was amply confirmed in my after-life. On awakening to a sense of our social position as a family, I found we were not amongst those considered respectable in our neighbourhood. The test of respectability consisted in having a set of mahogany drawers, and an eight-day clock in a mahogany case ; a holiday-shirt for the young men, and a printed dress with a large flounce for the young women. Many of the flannel weavers of our village could boast these possessions ; and they held up their heads above others not so fortunate. But the real aristocracy were those who used table-cloths, had knives and forks to eat with, and displayed a muslin window-blind on a Sunday. One family had a room they called a parlour, the floor of which was covered with a carpet ; a second-hand table-piano also figured largely, which was looked upon by us as a mark of great wealth and respectability. This family held quite a distinct position. None of us ever presumed to be even on speaking terms with such " great folks."

One Saturday evening I was playing with my companions, when my mother gently laid her hand on my head, and requested me to go with her into the house. I took up my marbles and quietly followed her.

" What do you want me for, mother ? It is not time to go to bed yet ; let me play a little longer, will you ?"

" I know it is soon to call you from your play ; but I cannot help it. Your trousers want mending ; and I want to wash your shirt ; for though we are poor, we ought to be clean. I intended to get you a pair of clogs, but I am not able. I am making you a pinafore out of part of a wool-sheet ; it will cover your ragged clothes, and you will then look a little better."

The quiet way in which she spoke, and the sad look which accompanied her words, subdued all my objections. I silently walked up stairs to allow her to begin washing and patching ; and while my playfellows were still laughing and shouting in the street, I crept naked into my humble bed ;—not to sleep, but to think and to weep. My mind wandered far into the future that night. What air-castles I did build ! I thought I grew to be a man, entered into business, made money, built a new house with a white door and brass knocker to it, planted trees around it, and had a lawn and a garden ; bought myself new clothes, and twenty new shirts ; bought my mother a new crimson cloak and a new bonnet, and gave her plenty of money to buy clothes for my brothers and sisters, and to get a set of mahogany drawers, an eight-day clock, and muslin curtains to the window. I then fell asleep a man of great importance, and awoke in the morning—without a shirt.

Sunday morning ever found my mother doing all she could to get us away in time for school. She rose the first and lighted the fire, got ready the breakfast, dressed the younger children, and helped us all. This Sunday morning I was going to have on my new “bishop,” to cover my patched garments. I shall never forget that new pinafore. The wool-sheets had at that time stamped on them, in large black letters, the word WOOL. My mother had got one of these old sheets as a gift from the warehouse ; but it was so far worn that she could not make my pinafore without either putting on a patch, or cutting through the letters. She choose the lesser evil, thinking she could wash out the letters ; but though she washed and washed, and washed again, she could not destroy the remaining half of the word. I put my arms down the sleeves, and was stretching the

front when I saw the letters.. My little spirit sank within me in bitter sorrow. I looked into my mother's face; but when I saw the tears in her eyes, I instantly said—

“Never mind, mother; never mind. It will do very well. It covers my patches; and when I get to school I will sit on the letters, and then no one will see them. Don't cry, mother; we shall be better off yet.”

Away I went to the Sunday-school, with bare feet, and a pack-sheet pinafore, with half the letters WOOL down one side, to take my place in the third Bible-class, among boys who were much better dressed, and who did not like to sit beside me on that account.

I well remember the place where I sat that day, and how I put my bare feet under the form to prevent my proud class-mates from treading on my toes. The feeling that I was poor distressed me. But I knew that if I did not continue to go to school my mother would be grieved; and I could not bear the thought of grieving her. To think I had left her in tears made me sad; but when I saw her come to the service, and saw her look down at me from the gallery and smile, all was right again. I could smile in return, join in singing God's praises, and hope for better days.

If ever mother understood the full meaning of those beautiful words,—“I was glad when they said, Let us go up to the house of the Lord,” I believe *my* mother did. Nothing astonished me more in her character than to see her steady, quiet, Christian conduct. Yet a hundredth part of the trials she had constantly to endure would have caused thousands to sit down in hopeless sorrow. I now believe she never went to the sanctuary without a petition, for she never went without a trouble. And I also believe

she left many of her troubles behind ; besides God fulfilled His promise in delivering her. And that day, when she smiled on her poor ragged boy out of the gallery, I thought she smiled through her tears.

It was the custom in our Sunday-school, when the bell rang for closing in the afternoon, to give the boy who was first in the class a round tin ticket of merit, bearing a figure "1." These tickets were collected once each year, and the boy having the largest number had the most valuable prize presented to him. Teachers, scholars, parents, friends, and members of the congregation, assembled in the large school-room on Whit Friday to have tea, and to witness the distribution of the prizes. One year I had just one more ticket than any other boy in the school ; and, consequently, I was entitled to receive the highest honour. The evening before that memorable day on which I was to receive my prize, I was very unhappy on account of still being without shoes or clogs, and I said to my mother, as gently as I could,—

"Mother, do you think you could get me a second-hand pair of clogs for to-morrow ? I am going to have the highest prize, and I shall have to go up the steps on to the platform, and I shall be ashamed to go with my bare feet."

She was darning my father's stockings when I made the request. She made no answer at the moment, but put her hand to her breast, and appeared to be suffering great pain. O, how I repented having spoken ! I would have travelled a long way with my bare feet could I have recalled the sentence which seemed to have caused my mother such intense suffering on that night. Long was she silent ; and long did I wait for the words that would express the state of her mind. At length she said,—

"I know you are going to have the first prize at the

school, my child, and I have done all that I could to send you there decent. I have tried to borrow a shilling from the publican's wife, where your father takes so much of his earnings, but she scorned me. I have been to several of our neighbors to ask them to lend me the money, but our well known poverty seems to have separated us from all help. There are few greater calamities in this world than to be a drunkard's wife, or a drunkard's child. I often pray that God will keep me from murmuring ; and that we may have His guardian care. I do not wish to say one word against your father, and I hope none of my children ever will ; for after all he *is* your father. Let us trust in the Lord ; be good, and do good, and the light of heaven will yet shine on our path. To the godly 'sorrow may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning.' "

" But we have a very near relation, mother, who dresses like a gentleman. They say he has as many Sunday waist-coats as there are months in the year. You know he called a few days since to let us look at the fine cloth he had bought for a new overcoat ; and he told us he had given three guineas for it. Shall I go and ask him to lend us two shillings ? "

" You may go, but I don't think you will get it ; and it is two miles to his house. "

Away I went. I was soon there, for I could run swiftly. But when I got to the house, my courage failed me. I stood for a long time near the door, first on one foot, and then on the other, warming them by turn with my hands ; for the night was wet and cold. At length the proud man saw me, came to the door, and inquired my errand.

" Will you be so kind as to lend mother two shillings to buy me a second-hand pair of clogs ? I have nothing to put

on my feet, and I am going to receive my reward to-morrow at the school. I hope you will lend it her."

"Tell your mother that when she has paid me back the eighteen pence she borrowed some time since I will then talk about the two shillings, and not till then. Never mind your feet; toes were made before clogs."

On returning home my mother saw by my countenance that I had not got the money. Our looks of sorrow met. Little was said; and I went quietly to bed.

The following day I washed my feet for a long time. I was determined that if I could not get anything to cover my ten toes, I would make them look clean. I was at the school before the time, and sat in a corner alone. Soon the people began to gather. On the platform there stood a large table, covered with a white cloth. On the cloth the prizes were arranged with as much display as possible. Books, penknives, pocketknives, inkstands, a small writing desk, and other valuables arrested the attention of all who entered the school. The ceremony was opened by singing a hymn. Then one of the Superintendents (the present Sir James Kay Shuttleworth) mounted the platform and made a speech,—eulogizing the scholars for their good conduct during the year, and holding up to view the various rewards while speaking. When he came to the first prize he called out my name, and invited me on to the platform amidst a loud clapping of hands. O, how my heart did beat! I felt at that moment as though I would have given twenty pounds, if I had possessed them, for something with which to cover my feet. I arose from my corner, and, threading my way through the people so softly as though I were a cat, I walked blushing on to the platform, and received my reward of merit amidst the repeated clapping of the

audience. But when I got back to my place I sat down and cried as though my heart would break, because I was such a poor, poor boy, and because I thought some of the other boys sneered at my poverty.

And here, though a little out of order, I will mention a circumstance that took place about twelve years after. I was then grown into a young man, and the church had determined that I should take a very important place among them. Though the incidents in my mother's life already related produced a lasting impression on me, yet I never saw her weep as she did on the following occasion. My memory will ever retain the scenes and feelings of that eventful hour. It was one Sabbath evening; my mother, as usual, was seated in her pew in the house of God. The congregation was very large, and all were silently waiting for the appearance of the preacher. He, poor man, was on his knees in the vestry, praying for Divine help, and trembling with fear. One of the deacons opened the vestry door, and the young preacher rose from his knees and ascended to the pulpit. There was an elderly female among the congregation whose face was covered with her hands, and whose head was bowed in deep reverence. Large tears streamed down her pale cheeks, and her whole soul was greatly affected. That woman was my own dear mother!—and the young, trembling, timid preacher was myself!—her once little barefooted, ragged boy,—her own dear child. When I gave out the first line of the hymn, and the congregation rose to join in celebrating God's praises, my mother's head was still bowed down. Poor, dear mother! how she loved me; and yet she feared on my account! The sight of her made the tears run down my face and drop upon the Bible; it was a moment of intense emotion, and I greatly feared

my strength would fail me. The events of the past came vividly up in my memory. I saw the corner where I sat on the morning I had on my pinafore made from the old pack-sheet, and the form under which I put my bare feet. But now we had met again in the sanctuary,—she to weep for joy, and I, her son, a sinner saved by grace, and a preacher of the gospel of peace.

The combined influences producing this change of circumstances arose, principally from two causes. My mother was a praying woman, and a consistent Christian. She did not make a loud profession; but meekly and patiently carried her heavy cross under the most grievous privations, sufferings, and persecutions. She never returned evil for evil, or railing for railing. I am perfectly amazed when I think, that for forty years she should have been able to bear up under her many and severe trials without repining,—so long have drunk her very bitter cup without being driven to despair. But I have said she was a praying woman, and that explains everything. But she was obliged to pray in secret; and very often her week-night attendance at the means of grace was taken by stealth, or as frequently refused with abuse. Still she held on her way amidst every storm,—living a life of faith in the Son of God, and enduring to the end. Praying mothers never forget their children. The most powerful pleadings at the throne of grace are those offered by parents on behalf of their offspring. The mothers of Israel are not the only mothers who have brought their young children to Jesus.

I well remember one of my mother's prayers. It being the wakes at Rochdale, I had risen early, to have a long play-day. I was not aware that any one in the house had risen before me, and was softly creeping down stairs, fearing

to disturb any of the family, when I heard a low voice. I sat down on the steps to listen. It was my mother's voice; and she was praying for all her children by name. I leaned forward, and held my breath lest I should miss one word. I heard her say, "Lord, bless John; keep him from bad company; and make him a good and useful man." Her words went to my young heart; and they are ringing in my ears to this hour. "Lord, bless John." That short prayer, uttered by my mother when she thought no one heard her but God, has been to me a precious legacy.

Another influence for good has arisen from my attending regularly at the Sunday-school. From the first day I went, to the day I am writing this narrative, I have never left the Sunday-school; and I have had tens of thousands of blessings as a consequence. I have risen, step by step, from the alphabet class to the superintendent's desk, and from that to the pulpit. The Sabbath-school has been a blessing to millions, but to none more than myself. The twelve boys who composed our class at my first Sunday-school made a vow never to leave;—promising each other that they would work conjointly in the school so long as they lived. Only two out of the twelve have kept their vow; and only those two have prospered in this world. Five, out of the ten who left, have died the drunkard's death. A mother's prayers and the Sunday-school have been my safeguard and blessing.

The air-built castles of the night I went to bed a little boy without a shirt have been, to some extent, realized. The house, the garden, with the trees around, are now real facts; but nothing has given me greater pleasure than being enabled by Providence to help my dear parents in their old age. Once every fortnight, for many years, I went to see them; and on one of these visits, on enquiring for my

father, my dear mother informed me he was gone into a neighbouring wood. On going to join him, I found him engaged in prayer. I stepped back for fear of disturbing him, and ran home to tell my mother. She smiled through her tears, saying, "Our prayers are heard at last, and my sun is now setting in a clear sky."

I never heard my mother speak an unkind word to a beggar. She had but little to give them, but she always spoke kindly; nor was she ever known to differ with her neighbours. All of them brought her their troubles, for she was full of pity for all in distress; her own experience taught her to sympathize with the sorrowful.

I once told her that I thought her religion was of a very quiet description, something like that of the Friends. Her answer was, "I have found the church has always been the most disturbed with its loudest professors, and that little talkers are often the best workers." No doubt my mother's observation and experience led her to the above conclusion; yet it does not hold good in every case. There are many great talkers who are good workers. Constitutional temperament has much to do with talking, either much or little.

The ministers and elders of the church of which my mother was a member, held her in the highest esteem, and, on her leaving them to join the church above, ordered for her a funeral sermon. Eight sons and daughters were present on that mournful occasion; and now the remains of both my parents repose in the burying-ground belonging to Bamford Chapel,—my father aged seventy-five, my mother seventy-seven. Sacred is that place to me, and never do I stand beside that hallowed spot, but I thank God for a meek, patient, PRAYING MOTHER.

NIFF AND HIS DOGS.

AMONGST the notorious characters of our village, thirty years ago, the subject of this narrative stood the most prominent. He was then in the prime of life, of middle stature, with a strong constitution, and remarkable activity, and the whole energy of body and soul was daily employed in the service of Satan. His thin, tall wife, with her pale, sad face, and his ragged, wild-looking children, plainly told of a miserable home ; while his blear-eyed, savage looking bull-dog, his hungry-looking trail-hounds, and his naked, half-dead fighting cocks told the cause of that misery. He had a powerful voice ; and when in one of his terrible passions, or drunk (which was very often the case), his awful blaspheming might be heard over the whole village. When a boy there was no man I feared so much ; for on all hands Niff was considered one of the worst of men, and he tried in every possible way, to make all men for miles around as bad as himself. He was a great encourager of bull-baiting, and bull-baits were held about once a fortnight ; he kept a number of fighting-cocks, trained for the degrading sport, besides the dogs he kept for gambling purposes.

All the wicked publicans in the neighbourhood kept on good terms with Niff. He would get up a cock-battle at the house of one, a bull-bait at another, a trial-hunt for a

third, a dog-fight for a fourth, or a foot-race for a fifth ; seldom did a week pass without hundreds upon hundreds of men and boys, and sometimes even women, come rolling into the village from surrounding towns and districts, when scenes the most revolting took place. Dogs worried to death ; cocks killed ; the bull's nose and face torn by the fierce dogs, making him bellow and roar in agony, and in his rage snap the strong rope that bound him, and dash into the dense mass of men, women, and children, amidst yells, shouts, screams, and cursing, as if hell itself had broken loose. Human beings, more brutal, savage, and degraded than either bulls or bull-dogs,—furious as fiends, and maddened with drink, rushed upon each other in deadly strife, until midnight mercifully covered with darkness the revolting horrors, leaving us to wonder that the earth had not opened and swallowed up the guilty multitude.

A few men such as Niff, and his wicked confederates the publicans, planned and carried out these infernal gatherings, which resulted in the destruction of hundreds, both body and soul. All the publicans and ringleaders yet alive are reduced to beggary and rags, unpitied and despised,—additional illustrations that “the wicked shall not go unpunished.”

Passing through the locality that had formerly been the scene of such abominations, I once again met Niff. He had the same dirty appearance and savage look as when I saw him twenty years before, with a short, filthy pipe in his mouth, and three gambling, or trail-dogs, in leading chains ;—he was again going to a dog-race. The moment we met I stood still, right before him, and said,—

“Well, Niff, how are you ?”

He, too, stood still, pulled the short pipe out of his mouth and, rather gruffly, answered,—

“I do not know that it much matters how I am ; just stand on one side, and let me and my dogs have room to pass.”

“But before you pass I should like to tell you what thought was passing through my mind the moment I saw you and your dogs.”

He looked defiant, and made no reply, but stood still.

“I have been thinking you are the worst man out of hell, and I am amazed you have not gone there long since. You have been the ringleader of every description of wickedness for the last thirty years ; you have led hundreds if not thousands into sin and ruin, and I fear many of them are for ever lost ; and yet you, the principal cause of their destruction, are permitted to live on in your wickedness ; you are the greatest wonder of God’s mercy in all Lancashire.”

For a moment his eyes glared with rage ; next moment he held down his head, and seemed confounded.

Believing that I had produced some impression, and feeling anxious to follow it up, I laid my hand on his shoulder, which caused his dogs to growl, and said,—

“Now, Niff, is not all I have said true ? and is it not astonishing that God has so long spared you ? O, I wish you had been converted in your youth, and then, instead of being a worker for the devil—doing evil, you would have been a servant of God—doing good. Will you come to the cut-door service that we are going to hold on the Green on Sunday next ? Who knows but it may lead to your salvation ?”

“I am not going to promise anything of the sort, so stand out of my way.” He then pushed rudely past me, and he

and his dogs went growling on their journey to that very notorious place called Belle Vue, near Manchester. I stood for a moment looking after him, and said to myself, that if there was a man in England beyond the reach of sovereign grace, that man was Niff.

Several hours after, I again met him near the stone bridge in Rochdale ; he was returning from Belle Vue dog-race. I saw he crossed the street to avoid me, but being very anxious to gain my point, I crossed over, and again met him face to face, determined to make another attempt to get him to the meeting.

"Well, Niff, you are returning from the race. I do not care whether your dogs have won or lost, but I do care about your precious soul, and I wish you would make me a promise."

"What do you want me to promise?" he sharply inquired.

"That you will be shaved on Saturday night," I replied.

"What has my being shaved on Saturday night to do with it?" said he bursting into a loud laugh.

"Well, say that you will be shaved, and I'll tell you."

"Well, to get rid of you, I promise that I will ; but it will be the first time for years ; I have generally been scraped on Sunday morning."

"Thank you for that promise ; and now there is another little matter ;—will you put on your clean shirt on Sunday morning ?"

Again he laughed, saying, "That will be something new at our house if I do, for I have generally put it on on the Monday, if I had one ; but I will see about it, and I think I will do it."

"Well, now, you have promised to shave on the Saturday

night, and to put on your clean shirt on Sunday morning ; will you come to the Green, and be at the service ?”

“Nay, nay, I shall go no further ; I have promised more than I am likely to perform, but the man that sees me at a preaching will have good eyes.”

“I hope my eyes will see you, and that God in His mercy will meet you. Good-bye, Niff.”

Sunday morning came, and it was one of those sweet, calm, beautiful mornings, when earth, sea, and sky are clothed in glory, and seem to say,—“This is the Lord’s day.” O, the blessed Sabbath ! the soul’s market-day ; the great field-day for the ambassadors of the Cross ; the day when the shouts of the redeemed go up to God’s throne in one grand chorus, and the hearts of millions leap for joy ; this day, spent in God’s service, and in God’s house, is worth a thousand. Happy is the man whose God is the Lord.

On arriving on the Green we found the teachers, scholars, and the congregation of the neighbouring church already assembled ; also many people from the surrounding villages, some of whom had evidently come from curiosity. We opened the service by singing,—

“Sweet is the work, my God, my King,
To praise Thy name, give thanks, and sing.”

While the people were singing I looked around for Niff, but he was not amongst them. I then looked in the direction of his house, for he lived near the Green, and I saw him standing at the door ; I could see he had got his clean shirt on, and concluded he was probably shaved too. Before the hymn was finished, he stepped from the door and went away. I felt sad when he turned his back upon us, and mentally prayed that the Lord would make him miserable, and work mightily on his guilty conscience. While singing

the second hymn I again looked around, and was glad to see the face of Niff peeping from under the boughs of a holly bush ; and there he remained during the whole of the morning service. While the people were dispersing, I quietly walked towards the place where he was hid, and on reaching him, expressed my pleasure at finding that he had performed more than he promised, and earnestly entreated him to be present in the afternoon, and to come among the people, and not to hide himself.

“ I shall see when the time comes ; but I will make no promises,” was his reply.

“ Before Jehovah’s awful throne,
Ye nations bow with sacred joy,”

was the opening hymn for the afternoon, and again Niff was beneath the boughs of the holly ; but during prayer, and while singing the second hymn, he gradually drew nearer, till at last he stood amongst the people. His appearance created the greatest astonishment. Men, women, and children stared at him as if they doubted their own eyes ; but there stood Niff without doubt, and when he saw who was going to preach he sat down on a low fence, and prepared for hearing.

The preacher took for his text, “ Escape for thy life.” He spoke of the angel’s visit to Abraham, announcing to the good old patriarch God’s intention to destroy sinful Sodom, and the other wicked cities of the plain ; how Abraham pleaded with the Almighty not to destroy the righteous with the wicked, intreating him to save the cities if fifty good men were found there ; how the Lord promised that if fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, or even ten righteous were found in all the four cities, He would save them ; how Abraham in sorrow returned to his tent, and the angels went on

to Sodom to warn the good man Lot of the coming destruction, urging him immediately to "escape for his life," declaring that they could do nothing until he was safe. Here the minister, warming with his subject, exclaimed, "What! what! must the pent-up elements of destruction be held back!—the fiery storm and flaming deluge be arrested!—must the uplifted hand of the Omnipotent God, which in just judgment was on the point of striking the terribly guilty cities, refuse to move, because one good man was in danger! O God, how precious in Thy sight is one of Thy servants! Great are thy mercies towards them that fear Thee! And yet God's mercies to His servant Lot were not greater than they are to every one present. To save us from eternal destruction He left His throne in glory, took upon himself the form of man, wept, groaned, and died for our salvation. Yes,

He that distributes crowns and thrones,
Hangs on a tree, and bleeds, and groans;
The Lord of life resigns His breath,
The King of glory bows to death.

O, what wondrous love!—what wondrous love! And this for me! Yes, wicked sinner, and it was for ~~thee~~—for thee!"

Just at this point Niff sprang from the low fence on which he was sitting, and gazed on the minister with the most anxious look. He seemed to forget where he was, so deeply was he absorbed with the glorious truths now for the first time sounding in his ears. The arrow had pierced his soul; God's word was breaking his heart, and during the remainder of the sermon he stood motionless. After the service I was again quietly walking by his side, and said,—

"Well, Niff, you have astonished the people to-day and

I expect you are surprised at yourself ; and now I have one more request. We are going to hold the evening service in the chapel,—it will require more resolution for you to enter a place of worship than to attend out-door meetings ; now, my dear sir, promise me you will be there at six. Do not tell any one of your intentions, lest they try to dissuade you."

Poor man ! he seemed unable to say Yes, or No ; but after a long and affectionate entreaty he promised to be there.

In the evening before entering the pulpit, I told several of the friends that Niff was coming, and requested them to provide him a seat. They all seemed greatly astonished, and had I told them Beelzebub would be visibly present, they could not have been more surprised. But Niff came ; and though the chapel was crowded, his entrance made quite a commotion. Some wept ; others looked at him with wonder ; and several rose to offer him their seat. I was much affected, and earnestly wished that he might find the Friend of sinners, and go down to his house justified.

There is in the calm, earnest worship of the sanctuary a hallowing, subduing influence, which melts the soul in tenderness and love. In the communion of saints there is a sublime grandeur, and the songs of the church militant and the church triumphant seem to be blending in one grand anthem to Him who washed us from our sins in His own blood. Such an influence was felt that evening. Amidst tears of joy the groans of the penitent were heard. During the prayer-meeting that followed the sermon I knelt beside Niff. But he could neither kneel, nor sit, nor stand ; yet he did all these things without any regard to order,—taking out a ragged pocket-handkerchief to wipe away the sweat

which was streaming down his face. His chest heaved like a man in convulsions. He looked at me with the most imploring look, and groaned out, "What must I do? What must I do?"

"Can you give up your dogs, Niff?" I asked in a low voice.

"Sell my dogs! sell my dogs! what has that to do with it?" he exclaimed.

"All must be given up for Christ. Your dogs are your gods; can you part with them for salvation?"

"Give up my dogs! What harm have they done? No, no; I cannot give up such good runners as they are."

"Then there is no hope of mercy, if we cannot give up all for Christ, we shall never find Him; your case is hopeless except you give up your dogs."

Niff rose from his knees, still wiping the tears and sweat from his face. Just then the benediction was pronounced, and the people all retired from the place.

Many persons may not approve of the above conversation being held during a prayer-meeting. As a rule it might be objectionable; in this case I think it was pardonable. The meeting was not disturbed, the poor penitent asked what he must do, and it was my duty to point him to Jesus.

On my way home I called at his house; he had got his coat off, and was still wiping his face and neck. His wife and children were looking at him in speechless wonder, and the three gambling-dogs lay growling on the floor. Addressing myself first to his wife, I said,—

"Mrs. Kershaw, I see you are astonished, and no wonder. Your husband has attended three religious services to-day; I think a great change is coming over him. You know what a wicked life he has led, and how you and your chil-

dren have suffered in consequence. His tongue, that has millions of times blasphemed the name of God, has this day cried for mercy ; and the man who, above all others, seemed to be beyond the reach of mercy, will, through faith in Christ, obtain salvation." Then turning to Niff, I again repeated that the dogs must be given up before he could be saved.

"O, what must I do? Cannot I keep those dogs and get pardon too? The dogs are innocent enough, are they not?"

"Yes," I replied, "the dogs are not to blame ; but I am informed that you have yet three races to come off, and there is much betting on them ; but dogs and wicked companions must all go, or you are a lost man!"

After kneeling with him and his family in prayer, I left him still weeping.

Mr. J. Guttridge having to preach at the same place,—Bagslate,—the following week, he, at my request, called on Niff, and took him to the service. He greatly helped the poor penitent to grope his way to the Cross. The following Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday were days of strong cries and many tears. On the Thursday he got rid of his dogs ; and about two o'clock on the Friday morning he rose from a sleepless bed, fell on his knees, and cried out for mercy and pardon so loud that he alarmed the whole house :—"O, my Lord Jesus Christ! I have now given up all that I cared about for Thee ; if there be anything else left, show me, and I will give it up too. Jesus, save me! pardon my mountain of guilt, and speak my sins forgiven!" That prayer was heard, and Niff sprang from his knees, a sinner saved by grace ; and so loud did he praise God that his wife and children thought him mad. But he went down

on his knees again, and began to pray for their salvation,—a sure sign that he had obtained it himself.

He called on me a few days after, and related the above account of his conversion; he seemed unspeakably happy. With the most child-like simplicity, he asked me what he must do to keep from falling back into sin, and how to get rid of his cock-fighting, dog-racing, drinking, Sabbath-breaking companions; for they would be coming to his house as usual.

“Well, Niff, they must be utterly forsaken. My advice is, have a chapter of the Bible read, and kneel down with your family once a-day. Begin right at home; and when your old wicked companions come to see you, ask them to sit down, and tell them all about your conversion; and if they come on Sunday, request them to go with you to the chapel. You will by these means soon rid your self of them, and perhaps do some good.

Niff resolutely followed the advice given, and fearlessly informed his old companions of the change wrought in his soul by Divine grace. He earnestly warned them, also, of the consequences attending their wicked ways. As might be expected, they were greatly astonished; in fact the whole country was amazed, for there were few blackguards within the sound of Rochdale church bells but were personally acquainted with him. If the church steeple had fallen it would not have been more talked about. On passing through the village of Cutgate, where he resided, a woman, shod in old slippers, ran after me, exclaiming, “Now, John Ashworth, I suppose you have called to see Niff. We were never so astonished in Bagslate; the worst man in the world mended. He gets shaved on the Saturday, and puts on his clean shirt on the Sunday morning, and goes to the chapel;

we could as soon have thought of old Nick going to chapel as Niff."

"Yes," I replied, "and Bagslate sinners may all become saints; the same God that has saved him can save you." But she cut short my intended sermon by turning back, and running slip-shod into her house.

After Niff's conversion he had great sorrow of heart, in consequence of the wickedness of his eldest son, a young man about twenty-six, who had too well copied his father's example. After long persuasion, he one Sunday morning induced him to go with him to chapel, mentally praying all the way that God would have mercy on his child. Speaking to me about his son, he said, "If God will save my Jimmy, I will shout praises forever." And, wonderful to relate, Jimmy began to attend the Sunday-school, became a new creature in Christ Jesus, joined the church, and about twelve months after died triumphantly. Niff, while he was wiping the sweat from the brow of his dying son, a few hours before he expired, said, "Jimmy, my lad, who sweat great drops of blood for thee?" Jimmy replied, "*My dear, dear Saviour.*" I saw Niff standing beside the bed of his dead child. He stretched both his hands toward heaven, exclaiming, "Glory to my God, I have now one son in the mansions above,—my Jimmy is now in heaven. Lord, convert my whole family, and then we shall meet him in paradise."

It is now upwards of nine years since Niff gave up his drunken, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, gambling life, and by the grace of God became a Christian. When he heard of the conversion of old Lawrence and Pinder (see pages 24 to 31), two of his companions in sin, he was quite overjoyed. He called to see Lawrence, and they both came to request

me to go with them to see Pinder. What a meeting! They all wept over their past sins: and wept for joy over God's goodness; and all bowed together in prayer and thanksgiving at the throne of grace.

Last Sunday morning, March 22, 1863, I met Niff beside the sick-bed, and, as it proved that day, the death-bed of a well-known character in the neighbourhood of Bagslate—the celebrated "Dolly." He was urging the dying creature to look to Jesus for mercy. On leaving the cellar, where lay the poor expiring "Dolly," Niff began to thank God that he had kept in the way to heaven so long; and hoped that, when his last moments came, he might still be found in Christ Jesus. On shaking hands at parting, he said, "It is now near ten years since I gave up my dogs, and found mercy."



MY NEW FRIENDS.

LONDON! the best and worst place in the world, the vast emporium of human energy for good or for evil; how many thoughts are suggested by its mighty operations! Its wealth and benevolence seem boundless; its poverty and misery hopeless. Yet light and truth, contending with error and darkness, gain daily triumphs; the black cloud of moral depravity is giving way before the bright beams flowing from Christian sympathy, and hope sits smiling whilst contemplating the cheering result. I have travelled the streets of the great city by night and by day, beholding both its magnificence and its misery. I have walked through its palaces, parks, and picture galleries—its asylums, hospitals, prisons, and penitentiaries,—but no place produced so deep an impression on my mind as the “Home for the Destitute.” Here hardened villany and hopeless wretchedness were written on every countenance; all the woes of the Apocalypse seemed to have overtaken the truly miserable inmates. I felt they were all my brothers and sisters; and I felt, too, that sin, in some of its forms, had been productive of all this degradation. I also felt a degree of veneration for the men whose Christian philanthropy had provided such a home. I was sure infidelity had not done it; for infidelity never yet lifted a finger to lessen human sorrow, or mitigate human woe, in any age, or in any country. Love to God

and love to man are inseparably connected. That the gospel of Christ, applied by the Spirit, could reclaim every one of the miserable beings before me, I had not the slightest doubt. In all towns, hundreds of such are to be found, who never hear the gospel, and who never attend either our churches or our chapels. Is it not the duty of every man whose heart God has touched, to do all he can for the redemption of such? If they will not come to us, then we must go to them,—meet them on their own terms, and provide them with places of worship adapted to their own condition; trying, in the spirit of love, to gather in the outcast, and to tell them the tale of the Cross.

These reflections induced me to make a vow, that, on my return to Rochdale, I would at once open a “Chapel for the Destitute.” I consulted my friends, and endeavoured to enlist them in the undertaking. “What!” says one, “are you going to teach the poor that our churches are not open to them? We have plenty of room; why do they not come?” “What?” says another, “are you going to widen the distance betwixt the rich and the poor, by opening for them separate places of worship? You will do more harm than good.” “What!” said a third, “do you expect to get a congregation from amongst the degraded? If you tap a barrel of ale every Sunday you may, but not otherwise.”

I am now ashamed to say that, meeting with the above objections, and finding none to help me, I gave up the undertaking. But, several years after, while labouring under affliction, I remembered my broken vow, and again resolved that, if the Lord would deliver me, I would do all I could to bring sinners from the highways and hedges. I prayed earnestly that He would give me grace and firmness of purpose to endure any amount of ridicule, abuse, misrepresen-

tation, opposition, or imposition ; that he would take money matters entirely into His own hands, and send pecuniary help as it might be required. Believing that God would bless the undertaking, I determined not to consult any human being, but go at once to work, depending upon God's help and blessing. I took a small room, and got two thousand hand-bills printed, worded as follows :—

CHAPEL FOR
THE DESTITUTE,
NEAR THE BANK STEPS,
BAILIE STREET, ROCHDALE.

Ye houseless, homeless, friendless, penniless outcasts ... Come !
In rags and tatters Come !
Ye poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind Come !
Of whatever colour or nation, creed or no creed... .. Come !

Jesus loves you, and died to save you.

“Come, then, to Him all ye wretched,
Lost and ruined by the fall ;
If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all.”

NO COLLECTIONS.

All we seek is your welfare, both body and soul.
Service every Sunday evening at a quarter-past six.

Come, poor sinner ; come, and welcome !

Fifty of these bills were fixed on blue pasteboard, with a small loop of red tape at the top. With nails in one pocket and a hammer in the other, I went to all the barbers' shops and lodging-houses in the town, requesting permission to hang up the cards. In no place was I refused, and I returned home in the evening rejoicing over my success.

One Sunday morning—to me a memorable Sunday morning—with about five hundred bills in my pocket, I

began to walk through the back streets and low places ; and where I saw either man or woman in dirt or rags, I offered them a bill, and respectfully requested them to come to the service. If they could not read the bill, I read it for them. Some made merry with it, others stared at me, but very few promised to come.

Soon after dinner I entered one lodging-house, and asked permission to see the inmates. I was shown into a large room, containing sixteen persons. I pulled off my hat, bowed to the company, and began to distribute my bills. One young man, with a short pipe in his mouth, twisted my paper into a spill to light his tobacco, then burst out laughing and began to dance a jig in the midst of the floor. Without seeming to take notice of his having burned my bill, I said,—

“ You can dance well ; can you do anything else so cleverly ? ”

“ Yes, I am a first-rater at everything,” was the answer.

“ Well, let me hear if you can read this paper as well as you can dance.”

He took the bill, pulled the pipe out of his mouth, stood on an old wooden-bottomed chair, and began, with a theatrical bearing and a loud voice, to read ; but when he came to the words, “ Jesus loves you, and died to save you,” his voice faltered ; he quietly stepped down, and laid the paper on the chair, observing, “ I wish I had not read that, it reminds me of better days.” Seeing the dancer break down, there was a general call for “ Jenny Lind.” The person honoured by that name was partaking of a tea-dinner in the corner. She earned her bread by singing in the streets and public-houses. Jenny took the bill and read it through, and, amidst the clapping of hands, resumed her tea-dinner.

A surly-looking man, with a flat nose and blood-shot eyes, growled out, "I thought there was nought in heaven, earth, or hell that cared for us, but it seems there is somebody does."

"Yes," I replied, "that paper is true; Jesus loves you and died to save you, and I, His servant, am come to tell you of His love. Now which of you will be the first to promise to be at the 'Chapel for the Destitute' to-night?"

This was met with a loud laugh from all the company, one of them observing, "That's a capital joke!"

Here let me further describe the characters I was trying to induce to attend a place of worship. I have mentioned the dancing-man, the flat-nosed man, and the singing-woman, called Jenny Lind. In addition to these there was one they called "Peg-leg." This man was polishing his wooden-leg with the black-lead brush. On asking him why he did not use blacking, he replied that black-lead made his trousers slip up and down better. There was a thin man, with thick black hair, well greased with oil. He had a piece of a broken looking glass in his hand, and was trying to divide his hair in the middle, seeming very particular about it. One man, collier-like, sat on his heels beside the fire. He had a long black beard, and a dirty, ragged, red slop for a shirt. There were two old men, both poorly dressed, but one of them much cleaner than the other. The cleaner one had a large pair of spectacles on his forehead, and a grey-headed old woman for his wife. All the rest of the lodgers were fit companions of the above; but those more particularly specified we shall have to refer to again.

Wishing to get some one to volunteer, I laid my hand on the shoulder of the thin man, who was trying to divide his hair, and requested him to give a challenge to the whole

house. There was a general shout from all, that if I got him I should have the worst in the lot ; they should like to see Bill Guest in a chapel. " Yes," said the wooden-legged man, " if Bill goes, I go." " And me," said the flat-nosed man ; " And me," said the red-slop ; " And me," said Jenny Lind ; " And me," said the old man with the large spectacles. Bill very coolly observed that they had better mind what they were doing, or he would surprise some of them. But the whole fifteen declared they would go if he went. " Then I go," said Guest ; " and now let me see which of you dare show the white feather." We bargained that I was to call for them at six o'clock, to show them the way.

The next place of call was in a miserable-looking house, in which sat three men, on a short plank, supported by a few bricks. There was no other seat in the place. A square table with only two legs (and which I unwittingly upset,) was reared against the wall. A few broken pots, and an old rusty knife, were all the furniture in the house. They offered to go with me to the chapel if I would pay for a gallon of ale. One of them said he never went to chapel except when he was in prison, and he rather boasted of having been there six times. He was literally clothed in rags, and was without a shirt. He offered to give up his share in the gallon of beer, and go with me to the chapel, if I would send him a shirt. " Now I have you," said he laughing ; " send me a shirt, and I go."

" And will you bring your friends with you if I do ?" I asked.

" Yes," said they all ; " we will come if you find him a shirt."

They seemed greatly amused with the fix in which they had placed me ; but, a few minutes after, I rather astonished

them by producing a clean shirt. I do not say how I got it—but I did not buy it.

My next adventure was among a number of idlers on the stone bridge. While giving them my bills, a blustering young man, dirty, but expensively dressed, came up, and wanted to know what my papers were about. I handed him one; he read it, and then said, "Mr. Ashworth, look at me. You see a man that deserves damnation, if ever man did. I am the unworthy son of the best of fathers and mothers. They set me a good example, but I got amongst wicked companions, have spent in cursed drink hundreds of pounds, wandered from home, and now I am a wretched outcast."

"But if you are a wanderer from home, and not a Rochdale man, how do you know me?" I asked.

"I heard you give an address in Bury last April, and heard you point out the curse that tracks the steps of those that dishonour their parents; and, believing you intended it for me, I felt at the time that I could have shot you. But all you said is true; there is a dark look-out for every young man and woman who wilfully cause sorrow to their parents, especially if they are like mine."

"Will you come to the Chapel to-night? there is mercy for the worst, if they earnestly seek it."

"Yes, I will come, but I shall never have mercy until I repent of my conduct to my parents."

"It was now five o'clock. In an hour and a quarter I should have to meet my first congregation, at the "Chapel for the Destitute." I went home to tea, but could not eat. I went up stairs, and, falling on my knees, poured out my soul to God for help. "Lord, help me! Lord, help me!" was all I could say, though I remained long in prayer.

Exactly at six, I called on my sixteen friends at the

lodging-house. My entrance was the signal for a general move. Bill Guest had finished dividing his hair, and had done his best to look smart. Boz, or Boswell, had fitted on his leg, and all were instantly ready. Not one had shown "the white feather." They laughed at each other, and were all greatly excited. "Who will lead up?" was bawled out by the red-slop man, and it was agreed we should go two abreast, I and Boz (the wooden-legged man) being the first. In this order we marched down King-street, over the iron bridge, through the Butts, to the preaching-room. All the way we attracted much attention, some remarking that we were the awkward squad, others that we were going to the rag-shop, whilst others exclaimed, "That bangs all!" But what was to them a cause of merriment was to me a source of great anxiety. As I walked quietly on with the wooden-legged man, I could not keep back my tears. "Lord, help me!" was still my earnest prayer.

On my arrival at the room, I found my friend with the new shirt, and his two companions, had already taken their seats; also three well-known characters,—Lis Dick, Leach, and Sprowle—two shillings would have been a good prize for the wardrobe of all three. They were soon followed by the prodigal son and four others, in all about twenty-seven persons.

I had provided the Religious Tract Society's penny hymn-book, and handed one to each; then, taking my place behind a table, I gave out the page. Few could find the hymn, but all pretended to do so; and when I set the tune, the Old Hundred, I found that not one of the men, and only one of the women, could join in singing, and that one was the so-called Jenny Lind. I could have well dispensed with *her* help, for she began singing before she knew what the tune

was, and she had a screeching voice, the effect of which on my nerves was something like that produced by the sharpening of a saw with a file ; this caused a general titter through the congregation. I had intended to sing five verses, but was glad to give up with three. What Jenny's success was in singing in the streets and public-houses I know not, but I know I was afraid to join her a second time, though my friends gave me credit for being a tolerably good singer. So ludicrous had been the whole performance, that many of the congregation were almost convulsed with suppressed laughter, and I did not think it prudent to engage in prayer until they were in a more serious state of mind, so I requested them to sit down. I then began to tell them about my reasons for beginning a place of worship for the destitute ; of my visit to London ; what I there saw, and the vow I had made ; told them how I had broken that vow, been afflicted, and again vowed and prayed for help ; told them of my own conversion to God ; how long I had served Him, and how happy I was in His love ; but, above all, told them of the love of Jesus Christ in dying to save their souls from hell, and bring them to heaven ; pointed out the dreadful consequences of rejecting God's mercy, and the misery of a life of sin, and besought them all, at once, to seek salvation through the shed blood of the Redeemer.

I have spoken to many congregations, but to none more attentive than these twenty-seven. O, how my soul did yearn in love to those miserable beings ! The young prodigal—the wanderer from home—the wretched son of praying parents, writhed in agony ; some wept, and all were serious. I then proposed prayer, and told them that they might stand, sit, or kneel, just as they liked ; but they all knelt down, and ere we rose the Spirit of God worked with

power. Lis Dick, and the old man with the large spectacles, remained on their knees after all the others had risen : they both afterwards confessed that they had not prayed for years before.

During the following week, in all my walks on business, I had my pockets stuffed with my hand-bills. Whenever I saw a certain class of females, tramps, hawkers, rag and bone dealers, scavengers, donkey-drivers, or any of the miserable-looking beings that are too numerous in all towns, I contrived to get into conversation with them, and then handed them one of my papers. Several nights I went to visit the various low lodging-houses, to make new friends. Many writers have attempted to describe the character of the wandering tribes of England, who, in their strange, wild, exciting life, travel under a thousand pretences from town to town, spending their evenings in lodging-houses, and mostly found in the ancient parts of all towns, where buildings are low-rented, and the inhabitants the most squalid and miserable. Common lodging-houses are always the most numerous and the best supplied with customers. Crowds of strange faces drop in for one or two nights, and pass away to make room for others. Amongst these wanderers we find almost every conceivable character ; and here the student in physiognomy or moral philosophy will find an ample field for investigation. One house which I visited contained about twenty inmates, when full. There were three large lower rooms. One of them was called "The House ;" another contained a little furniture, and was for the more respectable lodgers. The larger one was dignified with the title of "The Travellers' Room." This contained nothing but forms, wooden chairs, and, under the window, a large, almost worn-out table. Here I have spent many

hours amongst both old and new comers, and on this occasion there was a fair specimen of the nomadic tribes. Simpering sellers of religious tracts; knitters of night-caps; makers of wim-wams and pincushions; a band of German musicians, and an organ-man with a monkey; a blind man with a leading-dog (not so blind but he could see to fry beefsteaks and onions); an old woman travelling to see her only daughter, whom she had been seeking for two years, and had made it pay well; another woman begging for money to repair a broken mangle, for which she had been three times in prison; a tall, broken-down school-master, with a red nose and battered hat; an old man and his wife travelling to their own parish, with a bottle of rum to help them on their way; a young dandy with a ruffled shirt, and dressed in seedy black; a quack doctor, and three women in search of their husbands, whom they had searched for so long that they had very brown faces (one of them had received a black eye from her husband the previous evening). Almost every one of these were impostors, and a fair specimen of the frequenters of low lodging-houses.

The red-nosed school-master, suspecting my errand, wished to "argue a few points in religion," pompously proclaiming himself a clever man on all controverted points, having never yet found his match in any encounter. I replied that I always endeavoured to avoid clever men, and wished to be excused; but this did not satisfy the seedy-looking champion, for he was determined to have a tilt. However, he condescendingly offered to let me off with answering the following question:—

"How could there be a just Providence, when men, possessing scarcely any learning, and almost as ignorant as Hottentots, should greatly prosper in this world, while a

man of his intellgence and abilities should be in poverty and rags?"

When I replied that his red nose would furnish him with the true elucidation of the problem, there was a loud burst of laughter from all the travellers, in which the school-master heartily joined.

On the following Sunday morning I went quietly through all the back streets and low parts of the town, where I found many groups of the unwashed; and in all places my custom was to ask for the best reader, and request him, or her, to read aloud the invitation. I took care to keep good-tempered, and in all cases treated them with respect; this had a good effect, and made my work more agreeable. One wretched looking man, that I fell in with, informed me he had been a Sunday-scholar until he was fourteen; that one Sabbath-day he and another boy agreed to run away from the school, and neither had ever been there since. He deeply regretted this sin of his youth, and said,—“If some one had shot me, or cut my throat, the day I ran away from the Sunday-school, it would have been a great mercy, for I got amongst bad companions that very day. I have been five times in prison, lost my character and friends, and am now living a vagabond's life.”

“It seems you do not know one of your old school-fellows,” I observed.

He looked me full in the face, and for a moment seemed confused; at last he said,—

“Is it John?”

“Yes, my dear friend, it is John, one of your old classmates, who has never left the Sunday-school, and who, as a consequence, has received thousands of blessings; but if I had run away as you did, I might have suffered as you

have." Poor man; he seemed greatly moved by the difference of our circumstances, and promised to be at the "Destitute" in the evening.

Evening came, and it was again a time of much nervousness and great anxiety. O, how weak I felt! As the time drew near I was restless and excited. I went to the room before the time, and I do not need to tell any minister of the gospel what I was doing while the people came.

At length I heard the wooden-leg, and a tramping of many feet coming down the passage. The company consisted of Boz, Bill Guest, and the other inmates of Smith's lodging-house.

My friend of the new shirt came in with his waistcoat pinned up to the chin, and the moment I saw him I suspected that this, the most valuable part of his wardrobe, was gone. After service, I laid my hand on his shoulder, and smilingly said—"Brierly, where is your shirt?"

He blushed greatly, and replied, "I thought you could not see I was without, as I had pinned myself up."

"Yes, I could see; now tell me what you have done with it!"

"I popt it for sixpence, to buy a pennyworth of sugar, three half-pence worth of tea, and two pounds of bread for my poor old mother, for hoo was starving. I have drunk, and drunk, till I had like to clemmed her to death; and if it had not been for the parish pay hoo would have been clemmed to death afore now."

"Well, you did right to see to your mother, but we must have the shirt back; so you will call in the morning and you shall have it again." He called, and I gave him a note to the pawn-broker, for I could not trust him with the money. He soon returned with the bundle. I advised him

never to take anything to pawn again. The answer I got was,—

“Did yere ever know ony body 'at once begun poppin' ever gie o'er? It is summat like drinkin', if they wunce begin; dram-shops and pop-shops are brothers.”

Two of the new-comers, the second Sunday evening, consisted of a thin, grey-haired old man, and a little, thickset man; both were in rags. The short man drove a donkey cart, had been a great fighter and drinker. He could not read, though he was sixty years of age. Taking them all together, I had again a strange congregation; and, now that Jenny Lind was gone, I was the only one that tried to sing; for though I set the most common tunes, none of them could help me. This night I ventured to take for my text Mark v. 19: “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee.”

I divided my subject as follows:—

1. The man here mentioned had a devil in him.
2. He came to Christ to have it taken it out.
3. Christ cast out the devil, and sent the man to tell his friends about it.
4. Christ still casts out devils, if we will come to Him.

I told them that there were swearing devils, drinking devils, lying devils, thieving devils, filthy devils, Sabbath-breaking devils, and idle devils;—that when Christ cast them out, He did not cast them out one at a time, but *all at once*; and I tried to show them how happy the man must be that gets rid of all these devils by coming to Christ. On asking them to examine themselves, in order to find out which of these devils possessed them, Lis Dick, with much feeling, called out, “All of them!”

Boz, the wooden-legged man, and Clough, the donkey-cart driver, both date their conversion from that night.

Week after week and month after month I continued to visit the lodging-houses, places of questionable morality, cellars, garrets, and all other places where outlaws could be found. I also went amongst the market-loungers ;—anywhere and everywhere likely to provide me with outcasts of society. The result was, that my room (or chapel, as it was called) was filled with the poor and miserable, and my house with beggars, rogues, and vagabonds. And now began the real trial of my faith, and the dreadful strain on my patience. I had prayed at the beginning of my undertaking that God would enable me to brave any amount of ridicule, scorn, misrepresentation, abuse, or imposition, and now all this came upon me like a hurricane. I had begun Thursday evening services for the destitute, in addition to those held on the Sunday. At both times I had numbers of tramps from other towns ; for the news had spread to all the miserable places of resort, and one traveller told another that I “was good for a night’s lodgings and a penny,” which for some time was really true. The Overseers, Guardians, and Magistrates said that I was filling the town with “riff-raff.” The Governors of the workhouses were ready to mob me, declaring that I was filling their places with dying paupers. Some of my good friends said, “As I could not be king amongst lions, I was determined to reign amongst donkeys !” Lodging-house keepers came to make friends with me, wishing me to recommend their establishments, which, they assured me, were very respectable and clean. The idle, the dirty, and the miserable came in shoals for advice and to get money. Neighbouring shopkeepers often brought me eighty threepenny pieces for a sovereign, or

paper parcels of copper for five shillings. Some weeks I had several hundred ragged customers ; in fact I was doing a roaring trade.

But that which was most painful to bear came from some of my brethren in the church, with whom I had been labouring as a lay-preacher and Sunday-school teacher for more than twenty years. They spoke of me in derision, as the " Parson of the Destitute ;" calling me crochety, telling people to " wait a little, and they would soon see what they would see." I never replied to any of these cutting observations, for I thought they really believed what they said. But I am thankful to say, that for near five years I have not swerved one hair's breadth from my purpose of trying to do good to the dregs of society, and that strength has been given me according to my day.

But I had one sympathizer,—Mr. Mason, a machine maker,—a gentleman in the neighbourhood, who employed a great number of hands. I succeeded in inducing him to take many of the wandering mendicants as labourers, in order that the experiment might be tried if it was possible to reclaim them. Now I am coming to a dark chapter in the history of " My New Friends." I wish I could conscientiously have left it out, but honesty says, " Give both sides of the question—black and white."

Well, then, *black* first. From amongst one week's callers, I selected seven men, whom I considered the most likely to turn out well, and agreed with them to become common labourers, at fifteen shillings per week. Three of them I had to provide with second-hand jackets, and two with trousers, before they were fit to be seen, for they all seven looked like bundles of rags. Six of them turned up the following morning at six o'clock. They called at my shop, and I went

with them to work. The foreman of the works, being a Christian man, entered heartily into the undertaking, spoke kindly to them, and set them all to work at what they could easily do ; but the master insisted that I should call daily to see them, pay their wages, and he would refund the money. I bargained to give them a shilling every night, and the balance on Saturday ; and I told them, as they had been so long idling, they had better only make four days the first week, five the second, and six the third, lest they should break down. After seeing them at work, I went to the lodgings of the seventh man, to see what had become of him, for he was one of the three for whom I had bought a jacket, and was the strongest-looking of the party. I found him eating toast and beefsteaks. On asking him how it was he had not gone to work, he snapped his fingers, saying, "If I begin working I shall have to keep at it, and I know a trick worth two of that." This man has since been transported for house-breaking.

The six men worked four and a-half days the first week, and five days the second. On the Saturday of the second week, they had earned twelve-and-sixpence each. I commended them for their good conduct, but, fearing the consequences of paying them in full, I requested they would draw only what they absolutely needed, and make me their banker, but they all refused. One of them returned in a few hours to tell me he had bought a second-hand pair of shoes and a waistcoat, observing, "I now feel a different man, and intend to lead a different life." Before twelve o'clock that same night, he was in prison for being drunk and breaking windows. On the Monday morning I was passing through Heywood, a small town about three miles from Rochdale, when, to my astonishment, I saw three of

my men walking very slowly in the middle of the street, with doleful faces, singing a mournful song about being out of work and starving for bread. I stepped off the footpath, and meeting them full in the face, said,—

“Good morning!—how is it you are not at work?”

Without waiting to reply, they all took to their heels, and I have never seen them since. A tramp, that knew them all, recently informed me that one of them had died in a workhouse, and the other two have been frequently sent to various prisons as rogues and vagabonds. Four of my men were now gone. About the middle of the third week, a fifth enlisted in the militia, and at the end of the same week, the sixth left his work to resume a roving, wandering life.

Mr. Mason laughed heartily at my failure, but on my telling him that I had one very hopeful case, he agreed I should continue my experiment. The hopeful case was a tall, strong-looking young man, well known amongst the block printers of Accrington by the name of “Jam.” After the evening service at the “Destitute,” a man came to request me to go and see a dying man in Turner’s lodging-house, Church Lane. I found the poor man in a deplorable state; got warm bricks to his feet, sent for the doctor, and paid a person for attending him. In two days he was pronounced out of danger. I bought him a shirt, a flannel, a coat, and a pair of stockings, nursed him for three weeks, and believed I was the means of saving a poor brother, both body and soul. When the last man of the six had fled, Jam was ready for work, and I got him to the machine-shop, at fifteen shillings per week. For an entire month he kept to business, and I was exulting in my success, when Jam ran off with a tramp woman, and both of them got lodgings in Preston gaol.

Another case was a young woman I found weeping on my door-step. On asking the cause of her sorrow, she put a letter into my hand from the Chaplain of the Manchester City Jail. The Chaplain wrote to me to say that Jane Cheet-ham, the bearer, had served three months in prison, was very penitent, and he thought might probably become a reformed character. She was truly a friendless creature. I spent several shillings in buying clothes to make her look decent, and got her work in the woollen mill of John Ashworth and Sons. She attended all the meetings of the "Destitute," and promised fair. Jane had prayed while in prison, and she prayed for several weeks after she came out. According to her confession, she was getting the mastery of her besetting sin—drink. But she gave up praying, forged the name of one of my friends for a new shawl, sold it the same day for five shillings, spent it all in whiskey, then robbed a neighbour of a few shillings, and now Jane is serving four years in prison.

Another case was that of a young woman, named Mary, who came to implore my help to save her from a life of sin. With the kind co-operation of Miss Ellenor Ormerod, a lady who had laboured hard to benefit this class, a place of service was got for her. Mrs. Burchell, the lady at whose house she went to reside, knew she was a fallen one, and was anxious to help in reclaiming her. For several weeks all went well, but she left her place, forged my name for seventeen shillings for a dress-piece, and got it made on credit. The same night she turned out in her new dress, she committed a savage assault on another female, pawned her dress, and was taken to prison for the assault. On visiting the gaol on Sunday morning to read and converse with the prisoners, to my astonishment I found Mary amongst

them, and it was then I learned from one of her companions, also in prison, that my name had been forged. I requested Mary to give me the pawn-ticket, to lessen my loss, but she refused, observing, "I shall want some money when I come out."

The next case was that of a clean-looking woman, with a child, that I had seen several times at the Chapel, and who seemed very devout. She called to ask the loan of thirteen shillings, to get her mangle repaired; stating that a neighbour woman had turned the mangle too far and had broken the crank, and a mechanic had offered to repair it for that sum, saying, also, that it would be a great kindness, as she was a poor widow.

"Where do you reside?"

"At No. 70, Red Cross Street, and I shall be very glad if you will call soon, as I want to keep my customers," was the reply.

"Well, I will call and see your mangle, and have it repaired, perhaps, for less than thirteen shillings."

I had a wild-goose chase, for there was no No. 70, or any broken mangle in Red Cross Street; and, had it not been for another of my new friends, a little brown-faced, dirty person, I should have lost all trace of the mangle-woman. On asking the brown-face where she resided,—

"At Turner's, Church Lane," was her answer.

"Is there a little, clean-looking woman now lodging in Turner's house, who keeps a broken mangle?"

She burst out laughing, and asked if she had been to see me.

I told her all about the matter, when she informed me that this same woman had been begging for this broken mangle for about seven years; that she had met with her in Halifax, Bradford, Burnley, Blackburn, and many other

towns, always telling the same story ; and finished by saying that " she makes the most money of any of the tramps by her mangle tale."

The next was a wretched case of extreme destitution. She cost me many shillings to clothe and lodge her. Mr. R. Bottomley kindly consented to take her into his mill, and teach her cop-reeling. For some weeks she worked well, got better clothes, began to look clean, and attended all the meetings of the Chapel. We all thought Mary Ann's a hopeful case ; but she plundered two of her female friends of their best clothing, which I had to replace, then ran away, and I have not seen her since.

The subject of the next case we called " Will." He made the loudest profession of any of the lot, got his living by selling pins and needles, persuaded us he was making money, became a man of great importance amongst us, borrowed as much as he possibly could from the " Destitute " friends, and away he went, none of us knew where.

The last case I shall mention was that of a tall man, with a wife and three children. I have not often seen a more miserable group than this family presented the first time I saw them in the Chapel. After the sermon the man wished to see me ; he then gave a dreadful description of the sufferings he and his wife and children had gone through, in consequence of his not being able to get employment. I saw the family safely housed for the night, got the man work as a labourer, and very soon he seemed likely to improve his circumstances. The whole family came regularly to all the services, and both husband and wife professed to become changed characters. What distressed them the most was not being able to read the Bible, or kneel down to pray together in a wicked lodging-house, and the fear that their

children might hear bad language. This was a source of continual sorrow; they wanted to prepare for heaven, and wished to train their family in the way they should go.

Seeing that, for several months, the man kept steadily at work, and had not drunk his wages, I concluded there was some hope, bought him about two pounds' worth of furniture, and saw him settled in a small cottage. He then wished that a weekly prayer-meeting might be held in his house. My Scripture-reader and several others of the congregation promising to attend, a meeting was begun; but just at this time a great misfortune befel him:—while at work he was suddenly doubled up from a pain in his back, and was with difficulty got home. For several weeks he kept his bed, and great sympathy was manifested by all that went to see him. The doctor declared he would never again be able to follow his work as a striker for the smiths. On consulting about the best mode of making some provision for the poor man and his family, it was ultimately decided that a donkey and cart should be purchased, in order that he might begin trading in scrap iron, a business he professed to understand.

For several weeks Thomas, almost double with the spinal complaint, and leaning on crutches, went about looking for a donkey and cart. At length one was found, and purchased for four pounds fifteen shillings, myself being bound as surety for payment of the money by instalments.

It was astonishing to see how soon the man's back became straight after he had got possession of this extra property! but I was soon after more astonished at hearing he had sold both donkey and cart, while on a drunken spree. The news of Thomas's wickedness was soon known at the "Destitute,"

and caused much sorrow. The prayer-meeting at his house was broken up, and all became a wreck.

A few days after, the Scripture-reader went to visit Thomas, and requested he would give up to me part of the money he had received for the property, as I was bound to pay it. All the answer he received was,—“If Mr. Ashworth says a word to me about the money, I will run a knife through him.”

Soon after I met him in the street. He held down his head, and tried to avoid me, but I quietly laid my hand on his shoulder, and expressed my deep grief at his wicked conduct, informing him that I knew he had threatened my life if I dared to mention the money, and concluded by quoting the passage of Scripture which says, “He that returneth evil for good, evil shall never depart from his house.”

Thomas soon sold all he possessed, left the town, and is now a wanderer,—no doubt practising his deception in other places.

I expect the verdict of many, after reading the above cases, will be, “Served him right.” But still, much as I had been imposed upon, I did not give up in despair. I must confess I felt deeply grieved to find such a number of the incorrigibly wicked; for I met many, very many more than I have described. My faith and patience were very severely tested; but I had counted the cost, and was daily preparing for a continued conflict. My blessed Master healed ten men of the leprosy, but only one returned to thank Him; yet He went on healing all that came. He did not give up doing good because His goodness was abused; and as I had voluntarily undertaken to labour for the good of the most degraded part of the community, how could I expect any

better results? The tramping part of our population for some time gave me great trouble; hundreds of them attended our services, and many have returned to their homes, and are now leading better lives; but our great success has been amongst the resident poor of the town; here the Lord has wonderfully blessed our labours.

But about this time, a circumstance occurred which was more dangerous to the prosperity of the "Destitute" than the whole of these discouragements, and, had not grace been given me, would have been more disastrous in its consequences.

Some kind friend, with more money than prudence, persuaded a considerable portion of my congregation that they ought to show their love and gratitude, by presenting me with a testimonial, and he would give them a good round sum as a beginning. A secret meeting was held to determine what the testimonial should be. It was agreed that it should be a full-length portrait of myself; and the amount to be expended on it about thirty guineas. They divided themselves into six companies, each company to have a book for subscriptions. By mere accident I heard of what was going on; and after one of the Thursday evening meetings I requested them to remain a few minutes, as I had something of importance to communicate. I then told them I had heard of their intention to present me with a full-length oil-painting of myself, surrounded with a beautifully carved gilt frame, worth about thirty guineas, to be hung up in my parlor at Broadfield. "Now," I said, "when the picture is finished and hung up, you must all come to my house, and fall down on your knees before it, and say,—Glory to thee, John Ashworth."

Every eye glistened, and every face beamed with delight,

until I came to the last sentence ; then every head fell, and all seemed confounded ; and though I paused for a considerable time, there was not a word spoken, for I believe they all saw how foolish the whole proceeding had been. I then pointed to about nine persons sitting in various parts of the room, whose hearts I thought had been really changed by Divine grace, and whose lives testified to the change, saying, "These are testimonials,—not to me, but to the power of the Holy Ghost. Let us labour hard to increase the number of such testimonials as these, and God will bless us ; but when we descend to man-worship, the glory will be taken from us." The picture was never mentioned after that night, and I was saved from this assault on my weakness and vanity.

And who were those persons who sat in the various parts of the room ? The answer to this question brings us to the *white* side of our narrative ; for though I know that many of my congregation are still very ragged, wicked, and hard-hearted, yet there are others that "see men like trees walking," many promising cases, and some real conversions.

Amongst the promising cases I will only mention one, an elderly man—tall, straight, with Roman nose, fiery eyes, and thin, firm, compressed lips, evidently a man of considerable force of character, though clothed in rags. He was travelling through the country, selling halfpenny toys, made from scraps of fancy paper-hangings. On requesting this man to come to the chapel, he immediately stood "at ease," and informed me that I was speaking to a man, who, had it not been for his own stomach, might have been an officer in the British army.

"Then you are an old soldier, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir, I am by trade a wholesale murderer by order

of a Christian government ; but if I was to do a little retail on my own account they would tickle my neck ; and as for going to hear the twaddle of a parson, I shall do no such thing ; for they dare not preach without gown, they cannot preach without book, and they will not preach without money. When I can find a man that cares nothing about trimmings and bands, preaches from God's word and not from the creeds of sects, and does it as did the first Apostles—from love,—then I will go and hear him."

"It is not difficult to form an excuse where there is no inclination," I replied ; "but if preaching without gown, sermon-book, or pay, be to you a recommendation, then I am your man, though I do not pretend to be better on that account."

"But a thousand to one you will have a collection under some pretence, and collections are nought in my line," he observed.

"No, we never have collections for any purpose, for I am anxious to remove all possible objections, and to take away every excuse from men of your class and character ; not that I object to collections, for I believe that, where there is a heart to give a penny to the Lord's cause, the Lord will provide a penny to give."

For a moment the old soldier looked on the ground in silence, then rearing himself straight up, he said,—“Well, I have met my match at last, and will mount guard with the awkward squad in your chapel to-morrow. So you may look out for Captain Dick.”

He kept his word, for during the singing of the first hymn, Captain Dick pushed his way through the crowd, came near the platform and sat down on my left, beside old Lawrence and Pinder (see page 29) ; he evidently

thought he was conferring a favour upon me by coming. The lesson that night was the fifteenth chapter of Luke ; and, whilst the parables of the lost sheep and the prodigal son were being read, Captain Dick wept like a child ; his haughty spirit was bowed down, and at the conclusion of the service, he was so affected he could only press my hand,—not being able to speak. On the following Monday he called to bid me good-bye, and expressed a wish that he too might arise and go to his Heavenly Father ; “For,” said he, “I am a poor prodigal, and it is many years since I felt the force of God’s word as I did last night. The Lord have mercy on a miserable, wicked wanderer.”

On expressing my fears that he would not be able to get his bread by his few toys, and offering to increase his stock by purchasing for him one shilling’s worth of materials, he replied “No ; I can make what I have do, and it shall never be said that I only went to chapel to get something given too me ; there are too many do that.”

When Dick’s business leads him to Rochdale, he invariably attends the “Destitute,” and no one in the congregation seems more serious. He has given up snarling at parsons, as he calls them, and I have great hopes of him becoming a changed man ; for he has entirely given up drinking, and carries a Testament in his pocket,—two good signs of reformation.

A woman named Sarah, one of the number referred to as “testimonials” in a succeeding page, had been a “tally” wife. In Lancashire, a tally wife, or tally husband, means persons living as man and wife without being married—living in the awful sin of fornication. The subject, one Sunday evening, was in the fifth chapter of Daniel. When speaking of Belshazzar’s concubines, I paused, then observed that

I thought it possible some in my congregation might not know what concubines meant, and explained it by informing them they were the king's tally wives. Dwelling on the word, I said, "I wonder if there be any tally wives or tally husbands here? if there are, I hope they never pray. For such persons to pray is mocking God; to be living in open adultery—living a life of scandalous infamy—shocking and disgraceful even to fallen humanity, and yet to pretend to pray, is insulting God to His face. No, no; if there are any tally wives or tally husbands here, I beseech you, do not pray, for there is as much hope of the devil going to heaven as you, so long as you live in adultery."

Sarah went home in great distress of mind. The moment she entered the cellar on Falange Road, where she resided, she said to the tally husband, who sat by the fire, reading the newspaper:—

"There is nought in this house belonging to thee but thy hat; now put it on, will te, and just walk abeawt te business; o'll never ha' thee for a husban', thew has been too naught for that, un o'll never go to hell for a tally man; eawt with thee at once."

"I rather think thou art gone crazy, lass; what does ta mean?" observed the man.

"I mean that my flesh has fair crept o' my bones wal I ha' bin ot th' 'Destitute,' un' I know ut o' that's bin sed is true; so away with thee eawt of this heawse this minute, un God forgive us both."

The man was forced to go, for the house was in Sarah's name, and the little furniture in the house belonged to her. He put on his hat, and, as he was walking up the steps, declared that if he met the parson of the "Destitute" he would thrash him.

Sarah was in great trouble for several weeks. Night and day she sought pardon ; the Bible was her constant companion ; she attended all the religious services she could find, and at last found mercy. She now lives a godly life, and is much respected.

While on this subject, I will mention two other cases. On the Monday following, the day after I had been speaking against adultery, another tally wife came in tears to ask me what she must do. She said,—“ I heard your sermon last night. I want to be saved, but you have shown me I cannot be, in my present state. I have been living tally twenty-seven years ; I have six children ; the eldest is twenty four years old, and a member of the church. All the children are good children, and are fond of their father.”

“ Why, my good woman, you must get married,” I replied.

“ How can I, for the man I am living with has a real wife in this neighborhood, and she is living tally too ? Whatever must I do ! I have not slept a wink the last night ; I fear we shall both be lost. My eldest daughter was at the ‘ Destitute,’ and heard what you said, and she wept all the way home. We are both willing to be wed if we can be. What must we do ? ”

“ Did the wife of the man with whom you are living leave him, or did he leave her ? ” I asked.

“ She left him, and went to another man,” she replied.

“ Then get married, for the sake of yourselves and your children, and take all the consequences.”

“ We are poor, very poor, and always have been so, or we should have got a divorce long since. He fears going to prison ; whatever must we do ! ”

The woman wept all the time she was speaking, and, on leaving, expressed her fears of ever getting to heaven.

The same day a tall man came on a similar errand. He said, "I heard your sermon last night, and am come to inform you that I am living tally, and my real wife is also living tally. The woman I am living with was with me at the chapel, and we are both in great trouble, for we have a little child of which we are very fond."

"You must separate at once if you hope for salvation, and one of you take the child; I know you have lived a very wicked life, and it was you that first offended."

He replied, "We talked the matter over last night, and we have agreed to part, for we shall both be damned if we live as we are; she says she will put the child out to nurse, and go into service or to the mill, if I would pay two shillings weekly; but I am out of work and cannot pay anything."

"You must part at once, and I will pay the money for one month."

They separated, and the man regularly attends the services at the "Destitute." During the week, four other cases turned up, all showing the depraved condition of many of those amongst whom I was called to labour.

But to resume a more pleasing subject. I mentioned a man who was blackleading his wooden leg, one of my first congregation, whose name was Boswell. He got his bread by tramping through the country, selling tape, laces, &c., and had led a very wild life; but he became so attached to the services at the "Destitute," that he would come from Bury, Bacup, or Todmorden to be present; he was seldom absent, and became a truly changed character; the house of God was to him the house of joy and peace. I had missed

him several Sundays, when I received the following letter from his wife, which I give literally :—

“Sir,

“Bolton, Oct. 26, 1862.

“I take the earliest opportunity of acquainting you with my loss, but it is my dear Husband's Gain. He departed this life yesterday morning at 9 o'clock. He had painful illness, and gone under a severe operation. He had a very happy end ; he blessed his Jesus and was constantly in prayer blessing his God. You will know him, he lived at Smith's, in King-st. ; he had a wooden leg and went with Wm. Guest, at the opening of your chapel. Guest read words of consolation to him from the Bible, which made him very happy ; he Blest you ; he said you taught him what he never forgot, to seek his Saviour and temperance. Will you please to forgive this liberty, and I shall feel a great consolation in a letter from you.

“Yours truly,

“MARY BOSWELL.

“In care of William Fish, 149, Kay, Little Bolton.”

I felt a degree of sorrow on hearing of Boswell's death, and the letter from his wife forcibly reminded me of walking by his side through the streets, amidst the jeers of the spectators. He was the first man that entered with me into the chapel, one of the sixteen called the awkward squad ; and Bill Guest, the man that was dividing his hair, looking into a piece of broken looking-glass,—Guest, the man that all declared was the worst in the lot, he is the person mentioned in the letter as praying with, and reading words of consolation from the Bible to the dying Christian, who found a Saviour at the “Destitute.” Farewell, my dear friend ; thou art gone to where there are neither rags nor

sins, to that happy place where missing limbs are never known, for there are no wooden legs in heaven.

I have mentioned a short, stout man, that was well known as a terrible drunkard and swearer ; he would fight any man his weight,—he was truly ignorant,—could not read,—and earned his living by driving a donkey. How this man got amongst us I do not know, but, after coming several times, he brought a tall man, one of his companions in sin. In all weathers, and at all the services, the long and short man regularly attended, to the astonishment of all that new them. The first intimation of a change in the short man, was his telling me he was learning to read, and he wanted me to get him a Bible with large print.

“ Why, Clough, are you thinking of learning to read the Bible at sixty years of age ? ” I observed.

“ A’, I am, and by God’s help I will, for it will never do for me to live as I have done.”

“ Do you ever pray, Clough ? ” I asked.

“ Do I ! a’, mony a time a-day ; I never go into dunkey cote to yoke it up or give it ought to eat, but I go deawn o’ me knees, un mony a time in a-day besides. I hope God will ha’ mercy on me, un I think He will. That tall man ut comes wi’ me is in a wary way too ; he’s cried mony a hewer obeawt his wicked life, un he may weel, for he’s bin a swetter ; we’re nother on us reet, nabbot wen we com’ to chapel.”

Clough got a Bible with large print, and soon learned to read it. For three years he has lived a life of faith in the Son of God ; he says his donkey feels the benefit of his becoming religions, for he does not beat it now, and it goes better without “ thumping,” as he calls it. I called to see him on Friday last, and found his wife very poorly. He

seemed much distressed about her spiritual condition ; he spoke tenderly to her, entreating that she would not despair of mercy, declaring that if all the world was his own, he would give it to hear her say that her sins were pardoned.

The tall man, that Clough mentioned as crying about his sinful life, resided at a place called Spotland Bridge. In addition to drinking, swearing, and Sabbath-breaking, he had been a scoffer and mocker of the Bible ; sneering at, and scorning every one professing religion. On speaking to him after the service, one Thursday evening, he seemed greatly distressed, and informed me that thinking on the wickedness of his past life often made him break out in sweating and weeping. I lent him several books, and frequently spoke words of encouragement to him ; he sought forgiveness in sighs and groans, obtained mercy, and became one of the happiest men I ever met with. Wolfenden—for that was his name—was an astonishing testimony of the power of saving grace. For near four years he walked humbly with his God in newness of life, and then God took him. I said a few words by way of a funeral sermon, for he was a man well known ; his widow and a large family of grown-up children were present. After the sermon they all gathered round me, weeping ; the oldest daughter taking hold of my hand, said, “ Jesus Christ never saved a worse man than my father was ; no one knew him as his family did, and you little know what we have had to suffer through him ; but, for the last three years, he has been one of the best of men, and with his last breath he blessed God for this place of worship.”

After Wolfenden's conversion, he became anxious about his old companions in sin. By his persuasion a tall, elderly man, named Grinrod, who had not been in a place of

worship for twenty years, began to attend the "Destitute." On his return from the service the first night, he astonished his wife by asking if there was not a Bible somewhere in the house. The power of the Gospel on this man was amazing ; he became humble as a child, and greedily drank of the Word, which soon became to him a word of peace and joy.

The old man with the spectacles, named Solomon, one of the sixteen that attended the first service, obtained the like precious faith. He travelled through the country selling his tapes, pins, and needles, telling everywhere what the Lord had done for him, for three years ; then he died, blessing God for His mercies to him in his old age, and his grey-headed old widow is still with us in all our services.

At the conclusion of one of our week-night services, a poor man, in the simplicity of his heart, offered up the following prayer, which well describes the effect the Gospel had on many that were present :—

"O Lord ! I thank Thee on my bended knees for what Thou hast done for a lot of the worst men and women in Rochdale. Who could have thought of seeing us on our knees praying ; we cannot laugh one at another, for we have all been bad enough, and we are all poor as Lazarus ; but if we are poor in pocket, we are getting rich in faith, and that's better than o' th' brass i' the world. I saw some rich folks in the market, buying fat geese and legs of mutton, but I had to be content with a penny red herring ; I thought, there's a difference, but I do not envy them, for I dare say they have their troubles of some sort. Brass does not give us as much comfort as religion. Jesus Christ sent the disciples to tell John that the poor had the Gospel preached to them, and the Gospel gives more comfort than brass, fat

geese, and legs of mutton. I know one thing, it has made a vast difference in our house ; my wife had always a sad tongue, which I knew to my sorrow, but there is a mighty change for the better ; everybody is astonished how she is mended ; we now kneel down together every day ; but six months since we should as soon thought of flying as praying. If this chapel does no more good nor mending my wife, it will have done a great deal ; she knows what I am saying is true—for she is knelt here beside me—and the religion of Jesus Christ can mend anybody, except the devil, for I guess he cannot be mended ; if he could, it would mend him, for it has mended lots here almost as bad as him. The Lord help us to stand fast, for if he does not we shall tumble. Amen."

While Matthew was praying I felt my cheeks burning, and was anxious he would conclude much sooner than he did, for I feared his wife would again make use of her "sad tongue" on their way home ; yet, singular as it may seem, no one appeared surprised ; for if the poor, simple, ignorant people will pray, they must use their own language. I strongly object to studied vulgarity in prayer, but where it is sincere it is most excusable. Matthew is still with us, and may be seen every Sabbath, patiently assisting a feeble old man to and from our place of worship.

My visits to the homes of the wretched and miserably poor, week after week, talking with them, and giving away my hand-bills, soon brought around me a large congregation ; we removed out of the first meeting-room into the Lecture Hall, in Bailie-street. The work increased so rapidly that I engaged a male and a female Scripture reader, giving them strict orders to pay special attention to the poor outcasts of the town and neighbourhood. The results are, that the

Lecture Hall is densely crowded every Sunday with a serious, steady congregation of about four hundred ; the average attendance at the Thursday evening service is about three hundred ; at the Tuesday evening meeting (for inquirers only,) about forty, besides two cottage meetings. Almost every individual attending these various religious services and meetings are the really poor, not before attending any place of worship ; yet during the whole of the four years, I have but once been disturbed by the misconduct of persons attending.

The following circumstance may give some idea of the appearance and character of my "New Friends" when we first commenced. A poor woman, who had received much good at the services, with great difficulty persuaded her drunken, idle, ragged, dirty husband to attend one night. After it was over, and before he had properly got out of the room, he began swearing at his wife for bringing him to such a place, declaring that "all the scamps in the country were collected together, and it was a disgrace for any one to be seen amongst them !" He forgot that he was one of the worst and most miserable-looking of the lot, but he came again and again, and has given up swearing.

There is now a great change for the better in the general appearance of my "New Friends;" they are cleaner and better dressed ; a seriousness has come over the whole people, and many, I believe, are truly converted to God. I believe that there is nothing calculated so surely and rapidly to reform the worst characters as the plain, simple Gospel of Christ ; one "Thus saith the Lord," is worth all the thus saith the schools and the Doctors of Divinity in the world. God will bless His own word. "I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me," will for ever be found the truth.

I prayed at the beginning of my work, that the Lord would send me funds as they might be required. He has answered that prayer ; for, without asking any person for one farthing, I have received as follows, from various parts of the country :—

First year (1859,—see Report)	£15	6	0
Second year	“	26	9 8
Third year	“	109	7 10½
Fourth year	“	106	9 11½
The present year, already, near	200	0	0

All the offices I held in the Church before commencing my labours amongst the poor, I still hold ; for I have found by experience that the more work a man does in the cause of God, the more he wishes to do, and the less he does the less he feels disposed to do. And I am thankful to say that I have not suffered in my business connections ; by dividing my time I am able to attend to my business in business hours.

To God, *and God only*, be all the praise for His wonderful mercy and goodness, both to me and MY NEW FRIENDS.



MOTHERS.

THE front rooms of the farm-house called "Cleggswood," standing on the top of the meadow overlooking Hollingworth lake, near Rochdale, are sometimes let to visitors during the summer season. A few years ago, two mothers, one of them with three children, and the other with five, occupied these rooms. The mother with three children said to the mother with five,—

"How is it that all your children do cheerfully what you bid them, at one word! I have to tell mine over and over again, and sometimes flog them, before they will heed me."

The answer to the question was,—

"It is just as we begin with them at first; just as we begin."

This was a true answer, and the happiness and comfort of both parents and children depend greatly on how they begin, as will be seen in the following narratives.

Being for a short time the guest of the widow of the late Joseph Sturge, of Birmingham, I, at her request, accompanied her to the Stoke Reformatory, established by her husband. While walking across the fields leading to Rye Fields farm, we beheld many of the young convicts preparing the ground for the reception of the seed. On entering the premises, we saw others engaged in learning various trades, and all were actively employed at some description of work. It being now the dinner hour, at a given signal,

they were all soon seated around a large table in the dining-room, and were unanimous in vigorously discussing the question before them.

But to me the most interesting part of my visit was when, one by one, the boys came into a small parlour, to show us their writing books, and read a short lesson. Sixteen, out of twenty of them, knew little or nothing about books when they entered the Reformatory.

My question, privately put to twenty boys, was,—“Does your mother, or did your mother attend any place of worship?” One boy, and only one, answered,—“Yes.”

Talking afterwards to the governor, he pointed to one poor young lad—the last arrival—saying, “If you knew that boy’s mother you would not be surprised that he is here. That little fellow has had no chance.”

The following day, a procession of girls, from the School of the Incurrigibles, headed by their governess, or mistress, whom they were bringing in a bath chair, in consequence of her low state of health, paid us a promised visit at the house of Mrs. Sturge, and assembled in a large room called the play-room, to hear an address. These were not convicts, but had been sent to this good lady by parents, or friends, because they were unmanageable, and hence the name, “Incurrigibles.” I know something of poor, fallen human nature, and how firmness, kindness, and love will do much to rectify the naturally depraved heart; and I also know that the young are frequently ruined, body and soul, for the want of this firmness, kindness, and love, by those parents who themselves have been improperly trained, and, consequently, are unable to train their children aright. While speaking to these girls, the same emotions came over me that I had felt the day before at Stoke, while speaking to

the boys. I believed them both more sinned against than sinning, and my heart melted with tenderness and affection.

Speaking to the lady,—M. Weale, who, in the fear of God, and purely for the good of souls, had voluntarily undertaken the charge of these girls, and hitherto with great success,—I asked her opinion respecting the cause of these being thought incorrigible. Her answer was,—

“Bad treatment, and the bad conduct of parents; and especially ignorant and over indulgent mothers.”

Shortly after my visit to Birmingham, ten fine boys pulled up a boat at the steps of the Rock Ferry, Liverpool, to take me aboard an old two-decker man-of-war, formerly named the “Wellington,” now used as a reformatory ship, and called the “Akbar.” The little fellows plied their oars well, and we were soon at the ship, where I was courteously received by the captain. Everything was clean and in admirable order, and all the boys were busily engaged in some sort of work, intended to train them for usefulness in after-life.

I could not refrain from tears when, at the captain’s request, they all assembled on the lower deck, standing four deep, and sang the *Te Deum*, and several sweet hymns, with softness and harmony—all parts admirably executed,—and especially when they sang, to the tune of *Dijon*, that beautiful hymn,—

Just as I am—without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me—
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee—
O, Lamb of God, I come!

Here were two hundred and four boys on a convict ship, every one sent there for at least three years, standing side by side, singing, “O, Lamb of God, I come!” Had these poor boys been taught to sing those soul-searching hymns in

their own homes, by those who had the first charge of their young minds, few of them would have been found in the "Akbar." On putting the question to the captain—"What do you think the principal reason why these boys are here?" he answered,—

"Bad example at home, and especially from ignorant mothers, who have neglected their training, and allowed them to run wild. Eighty-five out of the hundred are quite different boys before they leave the ship; industrious habits, the singing of these hymns, and the religious training by the chaplain, have a wonderful effect on their young minds."

Another illustration was furnished by my visit to Preston, in February last, to attend a Mother's Meeting at the Corn Exchange. In the company of the Mayor, and Miss Ord, of Bank Parade, one of the Friends, I went to visit the three hundred and fifty-seven silent criminals immured within the gloomy walls of Preston gaol. On passing through the lodge, a young man, with brush and bucket in hand, was preparing to clean the windows, but the moment he saw us he became fixed as a statue; with his head hung down, and his hands and feet perfectly still, he stood like a block of stone, with the most humiliating and abject look. The sight greatly pained me, and I was turning away, when instantly two others, who were crossing a small court, became similarly fixed, not daring to lift up the head, or move one inch while we were present. O, how thankful I felt at that moment for saving, sustaining, and restraining grace; for I believed that grace had made all the difference betwixt me and my poor, silent, suffering, imprisoned brothers.

In one of the rooms sat a pale-faced girl, mending stockings. By permission of the governess I was allowed to speak to her, and laid my hand on her head, saying,—

"How old are you, my child?"

"Fourteen years of age," was the reply.

"And how is it you are here?"

"A man stole a garment, and gave me twopence to take it to the pawnshop; and they say I stole it, but I did not."

"Did you go to the Sunday-school?"

"Yes, sir. Do you think they will have me back at the Sunday-school, after having been in the New Bailey, sir?"

"Yes, I do hope they will," I replied.

"Have you any mother?"

She burst out weeping and said,—

"O, yes, sir; and she is poorly, and nearly blind, and I think my coming here will make her worse."

"Where does your mother live?" I asked.

"In Byron-street; and O, I wish you would go to see her, and tell her I am very well, and that I did not steal the coat. Do tell her I will be as happy as I can. If you will, O, I will thank you, for it will do my mother good."

Miss Ord and myself, in sadness, turned away from the sorrowing, imprisoned girl, promising to call on her mother.

After a little trouble we found the street and the number. On entering the miserable-looking house, I asked the woman if she was better.

"My eyes are a little better, but I am still very poorly," was her answer.

"Where are your children?" I asked.

"I have only two; one of them is out nursing, and the other,—O, the other—I wish you had not asked me."

"We have just seen her, and she wished us to tell you that she will be as happy as she can, for your sake."

"Seen her! Seen my poor imprisoned child! O! let me bless you. O! my dear, dear child. And how is she?"

Have you seen her in prison ? O ! bless you for coming to tell me."

The girl is now liberated from gaol, restored to the Sunday-school, and to her mother. But that mother, I have been recently informed, never attends a place of worship, and, I am pained to write it, is a drunken woman. Hearing this, I did not much wonder her child was in prison ; the good influences of the Sunday-school had not overcome the bad, counteracting example at home. I wish they had, for

Happy children,—

Thrice happy ye, whose pious parents lead
 You to the house of prayer ; and daily kneel
 With you before the throne, to ask from heaven
 That wisdom, prudence, light, and love they feel
 They so much need, to guide you in the way
 Of peace. If from such teaching,—by both life
 And word,—you should in after-years escape
 Those thousand ills that others snare, do not
 Lift up the head in pride, or boast, but speak
 To erring ones in gentle, winning words
 Of kindness and of love : do what you can
 To lure them back to those sweet paths, from which,
 Through guiding mercy, you have never strayed,—
 And God will bless the deed.

As a pleasing contrast to the home of the prison girl, I relate the following incidents :—

Several years since, I was, for a short time, the guest of a family, consisting of father, mother, one son, and three daughters ; all were members and labourers in the church, except one, and that one—as is too often the case—was the son. He was no drunkard, no swearer, no Sabbath-breaker, nor unkind to his parents ; but he was not a Christian, and this fact caused the rest of the family much anxiety ; for they knew that every day out of the way of life is a day

longer in the way of death ; that if we are not coming to God we are going from Him, and that every day the striving of God's Spirit is resisted, lessens the force of those strivings. For, if grace be not reigning in the heart, sin will be daily hardening that heart, and rendering conversion every day more improbable. John was the subject of many prayers, and he knew it, for he heard them ; and he knew that those who loved him most were yearning for his salvation.

Many of the ministers that came from a distance to preach in the church where John attended, made the house of his parents their home during the short time they remained. One of these ministers came from St. Peter's Square, Leeds, where he now resides. He arrived on the Saturday night, and, like many others, was nervous and anxious about his Sunday work. He retired early to his bed-room, and there, bowing down before his God, besought Him to strengthen, bless, and help him the following day : earnestly and long he prayed that he might be made the instrument of saving some poor soul. During the minister's prayer, John had several times passed his bed-room door, and heard him ; and before the family retired to rest he said,—

“ Mother, there will be something to do to-morrow ; your minister has been praying so earnestly, I expect somebody will know before he goes back.”

Little more was said ; but the prayer of the mother that night was, that that “ somebody ” might be her son John.

In the morning, the minister ascended the pulpit, dejected in spirits, but firmly trusting in Him who still says to His faithful ambassadors, “ Lo, I am with you.” A divine influence pervaded the whole congregation ; but more especially was this the case at the evening service. Then Mr. Horton pleaded with the young, beseeching them, while

their hearts were tender, before sin had hardened them, to give them to God. He invited them to meet him at the close of the service, for prayer. Many complied with his request, and John's parents and sisters were hoping he would be amongst the number ; the mother especially watched his movements, and wept when she saw him go out of the chapel. The rest of the family went to join in prayer, and were on their knees, when John silently re-entered, and, with sobs, knelt down beside his mother, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner !"

O ! what a moment was that to all that knew him ; but especially what a moment to the parents and sisters ! That moment had been looked for, and prayed for. It was come at last, and John was seeking mercy. Angels, too, knew it, for angels rejoice when one sinner repenteth ; and angels would that night carry the glad tidings that another sinner was saved by faith in the blood of the Lamb, for that night John returned home a new creature in Jesus Christ. And from that day to this he has been a cheerful, active, useful labourer in the Lord's vineyard, seeking to be the instrument in the hands of God of securing to others the unspeakable blessings he himself has received.

And now, who shall lay claim to be the honoured instrument of this conversion ?—the father, the mother, the sisters, the Sunday-school, the church, or the minister ? We answer, all of them, more or less ; and it is questionable prudence in any one individual in a Christian country to suppose that *he* has been the only instrument in such a case. The influences at work in a religious family are powerful. There the good fruit is daily ripening. And we know that earnest, godly ministers are often amongst the joyful gatherers-in of such fruit, when both sowers and reapers rejoice together.

Mothers, after all, are the best sowers of either tares or wheat ; no influence is so great as theirs, for good or for evil. Nations are what mothers make them ; the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. The mother that clasps the infant to her breast, whether from mere instinct, or from the depths of a mother's love, is the first to instil into the opening mind of her offspring impressions which greatly determine the coming happiness or misery, the weal or woe, of both mother and child ; for a child left to himself—left without proper training—will bring the mother to sorrow and shame. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it," is the voice of God, and must be true. Happy mothers ! who from their childhood have been taught domestic duties, and brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But all mothers have not been so taught ; and we fully admit that thousands are doing their best,—doing as well as they know how. The mother who said she never reckoned to tell her children to do what she bade them more than three times,—that if they did not do it the third time she always thrashed them, for her mother did so by her,—was doing what she had been taught. The young wife who, thinking she would please her husband, starched his pocket handkerchief, was doing her best ; and the other young wife who, having to make her husband's shirts, but not knowing how to shape them, spread the cloth on the floor, and got him to lie down on his back upon the cloth while she marked round him, was doing as well as she could. Some women will make five shillings go as far in house-keeping as others will make ten : but one has been taught how to do it, and the other has not. I know mothers that never were taught the Lord's Prayer, and were never able to teach their children to pray.

Mother's meetings will do much to help such poor women, who have been so miserably educated ; and thousands of poor ignorant mothers will be thankful for this unspeakable blessing. There they can learn home duties, economy, frugality, how to read, knit, mend, and make ; and, best of all, how to train their children for both earth and heaven, and this work will bring its reward, even in this present life, to both mother and children.

Within a mile of the place where I am now writing, there resides a family I have often had the pleasure of visiting. It has been the lot of this family to know what hard toiling to make ends meet means. For many years the parents have daily struggled to bring up a numerous family of sons and daughters, all of whom have been trained both to work and think ; to work for their bread, and think of divine things and holy duties ; to know their proper place, and exercise mutual forbearance ; to attend the Sunday-school and the house of God ; to hear the Scriptures read daily, and all to kneel down, while either the father or mother implored, for themselves and their children, the blessing of heaven.

As they grew up to a marriageable age, they were rigidly taught never to begin keeping company without first consulting their parents, and on no account to have clandestine meetings and secret walks, knowing that much mischief, misery, and ruin have often followed such improper conduct. It would be well if all parents would do this, for every one entering a family brings a blessing or a curse. Marriage is a serious undertaking,—a wretched or happy life hangs upon that step.

Many times, when congratulating the parents on their dutiful children and domestic joys, and expressing my

pleasure at seeing them all walking in the right way, it has brought tears of thankfulness from their eyes. In one of these conversations, the mother said,—“James and I have offered up thousands of prayers for our children, and there is not one of them but I have prayed for scores of times before they were born. Happy children of such a mother !

One Sunday afternoon in autumn, I was going to visit a Sabbath-school ; and though I was walking very quickly, a little girl was coming behind who seemed determined to keep up with me. Without slackening my speed, I said,—

“ Well, my girl, how far are you going ? ”

“ I am going home, sir.”

Sir ! Sir ! thought I, some one has been at work with you, for every little girl does not say, sir.

“ How far have you been ? ” I asked.

“ I have been with my father and mother to St. Stephen’s church, sir. We have had our dinner with our aunt, and father and mother are going to church again this afternoon ; but they wished me to be at home when my little brother James and sister Elizabeth came from school.”

“ I suppose you attend the Sunday-school ? ”

“ Yes, sir ; and it was our school sermons last Sunday ; we got thirteen pounds and threepence half-penny. As we were coming past a corn-field this morning, mother looked at it and said, she wondered that everybody did not love God for His goodness. The corn-field made me think of one of our hymns we had last Sunday.”

“ What was the hymn ? ”

“ Why, it begins,—

‘ Sing to the Lord, exalt Him high.’

And one verse says,—

‘He clothes the smiling fields with corn.’

But mother says that she likes the last verse best.”

I well knew the verse she referred to, but, wishing to hear the child repeat it, said,—

“Well, and what is the last verse, that your mother likes?”

“But saints are lovely in his sight,
He views His children with delight ;
He sees their hope, He knows their fear,
And looks and loves His image there.”

That is the verse, sir. You know my mother is a saint.”

“Your mother a saint, child ! Why, how can you tell ?”

“Well, sir, you know, my father works away from home, and only comes to us on the Saturday night. When he comes home, he reads the Bible and prays with us ; but when he is away, my mother reads and prays with us. Every night she goes with us up-stairs, where we can be quiet, and we have each our own chair. Mother reads and talks to us out of the Bible that she has on a little table, and tells us what it means. Then we all kneel down, and she prays for father, and then for me, and then for James and Elizabeth ; and I always hearken what she says about me, for I feel so happy when she prays for me. Then she puts us all comfortable to bed, gives us a kiss, and says, ‘God bless you, and make you good children.’ Now, then, is not my mother a saint ?”

“Well, my child, I think you are not far wrong ; and I wish all the children in the world had such MOTHERS,

TWENTY POUNDS; OR, THE LITTLE PRAYER.

To walk across the street, to turn the corner quickly, or pretend to see something in a shop window, because he beholds his creditor coming; to go a long way round for fear of passing his creditor's house, or hold down his head if forced to pass it, lest he may see one he does not want to see; to go to the grocer's, and stand, sad and silent, waiting until all the customers are gone, before he tremblingly asks for a little more credit; to make a desperate effort to ask a friend for the loan of five shillings, to pay the milk-man, the coal-man, or the rent, and be refused; to hear the long-feared knock of the creditor, coming at the promised time, making the heart beat and knock almost as loud, because he has nothing to pay with but promises; of which they have already had enough; to see them frowningly turn away, or threaten him with the County Court, except he pays what he cannot pay; to be thought dishonest, or a rogue, when he feels in the deepest depths of his soul, that he would rather die than defraud any living being of one farthing,—all this, and much more, has been the lot of many a man as honest as ever breathed.

When a man, in spite of all his labour, skill, and caution, is overtaken with losses; when trade is depressed, and employment gone; when, hoping against hope, he travels many a weary mile, seeking the means to obtain an honest penny, but again and again returning to tell the oft-told

tale of no success ; gazing with anxious looks on the silent sufferers dependent upon him ; sinking in his circumstances day by day, lower and lower, without the power to prevent it, until he comes almost to the border of despair;—this has been the experience of many a God-fearing man, and has wrung from his sorrowing soul that short, but oft-used prayer,—“ Lord help me !” One of the many keen trials to which a good man is sometimes subject, when doing his best to pay what he owes, and fighting hand to hand with his difficulties, is, when he is suspected by those whose good opinion he values, and sees, or imagines he sees, a change in their conduct towards him. O ! how deeply this pains his honest mind ; how sensitive he then becomes ! A look, or a word, which at other times would have passed unnoticed, now almost breaks his heart. And when that good man is an office-bearer in the church, it may be a preacher, and has to give his creditors sermons instead of sovereigns, prayers instead of pence, because his income is too small, or his unavoidable difficulties too great,—such a man will often, with earnest soul, have to use the little prayer,—“ Lord help me !”

Grey-headed old Richard Holmes,—who, for many years, was a very respectable preacher in Bury, but who, in consequence of family sickness and his own infirmities, had contracted several small debts,—received a letter one morning, which read as follows :—

“ I am informed you are preaching in Clarke Street Chapel on Sunday next. I hope you will take for your text, ‘Owe no man anything,’ for I intend to be present to hear you ; and I will sit in one of the pews, so that you will have a good view of me.”

Poor Richard had not the money to pay this creditor

before Sunday, and he was in great trouble. Shame, fear, and duty had a terrible battle ; but duty conquered, he went to his appointment, and found his tormenting creditor in one of the front seats. Richard preached from the text requested, and with such effect, that one of the congregation said to him next morning :—

“ I thought, while you were preaching yesterday, that you were giving us some of your own experience, Mr. Holmes ; was it so ! ”

“ Yes, it was. I had the text sent me by one who was present ; I had hard work yesterday.”

“ It is as I suspected, and I have called to furnish you with the means of paying him all you owe ; and I am glad to be able to do so. Your sermon yesterday will do good ; but I am sure it must be hard work, as you say, to preach to creditors.”

Speaking of this circumstance to a friend, some time after, Richard said :—

“ I have not often prayed so earnestly as I did on that Saturday night and Sunday morning. O ! how I did cry for help and deliverance ; and it came, I believe, in answer to prayer.”

An acquaintance of mine, John Steel, to whom I was relating the above, observed :—

“ Ah, I can feel for that man. When I first began to preach, and before I fully entered the ministry, I was many months without employment. I had been supplanted in the place I held as under book-keeper, by a young man who offered to do my work for less wages. The master offered me the same terms, but, thinking I could soon find employment elsewhere, I refused. I travelled scores of miles, and tried every place, likely or unlikely, but all in vain, and I

got so reduced, and so very poor, that I would gladly have done anything ; but trade being so bad, many were in like circumstances, and I was a long time in forced idleness. The good woman with whom I lodged was very patient and kind to me, though I was getting deeply in her debt. I had paid her twelve shillings a-week so long as my money lasted, but I had been several months and paid her nothing, and I was ashamed when I sat down to a meal, for I felt I was eating what did not belong to me. But, what I feared most was to see my patient creditor come into the chapel when I was preaching ; her presence always confused my mind, and I preached with much difficulty. I owed her money, and I could not pay it, and I felt sure she would think more of my debt than my discourse.

“As I had expected, she at last informed me that she was really not able longer to maintain me, and begged I would look out for fresh lodgings, and pay her when I could, fixing my time for leaving on the following Monday. I ate and slept very little that week. I believe I was on my knees nearly as much as I was in bed, and I wept much of the time. I again tried to get employment day after day, but failed. On the Saturday I made up my mind to go and enlist for a soldier.

“The nearest barracks was six miles from my lodgings. I set out without telling my landlady, but with the intention of sending her my bounty money towards payment of what I owed. While going I bethought myself that I had to preach twice on the following Sunday, and I began to reason thus :—

“Well, I can do without food to-day. I will rise early in the morning and go to the place where I have to preach in the afternoon and evening, and attend the morning

service ; perhaps some one will ask me to dinner. After service in the afternoon I am sure to get my tea, and a little of something after the evening service. I will then return home, rise early on Monday morning, and go for a soldier. I had got about three miles towards the barracks when I began to reason thus ; I at once turned back and most of the way I cried like a child."

"But did it never strike you, on your journey to enlist for a soldier, that the Bible and the sword do not well agree, Mr. Steel ?"

"No ; downright hunger and poverty can hardly reason. Many have done from want what they would never have even thought of in plenty."

"Well, and how about the Sunday ?" I asked.

"All happened as I had supposed. I set out without breakfast, but got invited to dinner. I preached in the afternoon and evening, got other two meals, returned home, and went to bed. I expected that on that bed I was lying down for the last time. I was very tired with my day's work, but could not sleep. I was hot and restless, for the thought of going for a soldier the next morning greatly distressed me. I felt—what no doubt many of God's children when passing through heavy trials have felt—tempted to doubt a Providence. I knew I was a converted man, and had the witness of God's Spirit with mine that I was His child. I loved him above all things ; and while labouring in His cause that day, I had been very happy, but, when my work was done, and my mind fell back on my condition, I was sick at heart, and almost every step home I prayed for help. 'Lord help me !' had often been my prayer, but never so earnest as then. I was brought very low, and wondered how it was that my cries in my trouble were not

heard, and that I was not delivered. My soul revolted at the red jacket and the musket, but all other ways seemed shut up. In the bitterness of my soul I asked, 'Is there a Providence? Is there a God?' 'Yes,' replied the faith that was not yet dead in me, 'There is a Providence, and there is a God, and though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.' That was a night of sore trial, and it was late before I fell into a troubled sleep.

"I was awakened early in the morning by a loud voice calling from the bottom of the stairs:—

"'John Steel! John Steel! Get up, man, get up; the person that took your place is in prison for stealing, and if you will be quick, and see the master, I think you will get it again.'

"Get up, I did, and was soon walking near the mill to meet the master. Oh! how my heart beat when I saw him coming. He spoke kindly to me, and asked if I had got work.

"'No, sir,' I replied.

"'Well, I shall be glad to take you into your old place, at your old wages. If you like you can come at noon.'

"I looked around to see if there was any place where I could fall on my knees. My heart was full. I sang, and laughed, and cried, and ran home to tell of my good fortune. My poor landlady was much pleased, and promised me another week's credit. I went up stairs and bowed down before my God. O! how visible to me was His good hand in this thing. I was not to be a soldier, with sword and musket, but a preacher of peace. Many times since then I have been on the verge of despair in temporal matters; for preachers have their money difficulties as well as others; but I have never doubted a Providence, or the power of God

to deliver me, and it has given me great sympathy with God's poor people struggling with debts, for it always makes me think of my own trials."

While writing the above, a magazine for August, 1862, was put into my hand, containing the following:—

"We have just received the melancholy intelligence, that Brother John Steel, of Holt, departed this life on the 15th of July. The circuit is plunged into grief at his loss; he had won the esteem of all."

Farewell, John! Thy work is soon done, and, in some respects, well done; and He that delivered thee in thy hour of trial has taken thee to where trials are for ever past.

The two deliverances here mentioned are only a type of what millions of God's servants, in various ages and places, have experienced; and, where there is faith and confidence in His goodness and promises, they will continue to the end of time. The beautiful Scripture narratives, which He Himself gives, are intended to strengthen our belief and teach us that cries in trouble will be heard.

The widow woman who came to Elisha, and told him that her God-fearing husband was dead, and the creditors were come to take her two sons for debt, had, no doubt, a divine impression, which induced her to go and see the old prophet. "What hast thou in thy house?" asked Elisha of the poor woman. "Not anything save a pot of oil," was her answer. "Go, borrow thee vessels, of all thy neighbours, . . . not a few. Shut the door upon thee . . . and pour out into all these vessels." She did so; and filled, and filled, and filled, until her sons told her there was not an empty vessel left. She, in her joy, ran to tell Elisha of her great deliverance. "Go, sell the oil, pay thy debt, and live, thou and thy children, on what is left," was his advice,

Yes ; first, "pay thy debt," was the prophet's counsel. She could pay it now, because she had something to pay it with. She was the widow of a good man, and the widows of the pious dead are not forgotten before the Lord ; and, probably, she was a good woman, and the Lord delivered her. And He will deliver all them that put their trust in him.

Many of the inhabitants of Manchester, and the surrounding towns, will remember a singular old minister, with a red, round, pleasant-looking countenance, and a bald head, who often preached in a velvet scull-cap. He was a man of very peculiar views, but almost unequalled in his description of Christian experience. This man once preached in Rochdale, from the text, "Lord help me !" Having read his text, he took off his spectacles, and, in his usual deliberate way, looked round on the congregation, saying :—

"Friends, by way of introduction, I will tell you how I got this text ; and if you will allow me to speak in the first person, I can tell you easier by saying 'I' than 'he.'

"Well, then, before I was fully devoted to the ministry I was in business, and, as most business men do, I worked a little on credit. When I gave up business and settled as a preacher and pastor of a congregation, I was owing several sums of money ; but much more was owing to me, so that I had no fear of being able to pay my creditors. One of these creditors, to whom I owed twenty pounds, called upon me for payment. I said to him, 'I will see what I can do for you next Monday.' He called on the Monday, but I had not got the money. He was rather cross with me, saying, I had no business to promise, unless I intended to perform. This observation roused my pride, and I told him I would pay him on the coming Monday. He went away in a rage, saying he hoped I would.

“I set out on the following day to see some of my debtors, not fearing but I could raise the twenty pounds ; but I did not get one farthing. I tried others, but with the same success. I then put down on a sheet of paper the names of several of my friends, certain that I could borrow twenty pounds from any one of them. But, to my utter amazement, I was mistaken. All of them could sympathize with me a deal better than lend me anything ; and I began to find out, that if a man wants to know how many friends he has, he had better try to borrow some money.

“The next day I made out another list of names of those not so well able to help me as the former, for I thought, if I can get five pounds here, and five pounds there, I shall be able to raise it all. I travelled many miles on my errand, spending a whole day, but returned in the evening without one penny. I began to ask myself, ‘How is this, I, a respectable man, and, as some people say, a popular preacher, cannot, among the whole of my acquaintance, borrow twenty pounds ? I thought I had as many friends as most men, but now I cannot find one that will trust me twenty pounds.’ My pride got a terrible shake, and I felt very little indeed.

“Friday came, and my spirits were sinking. I could not tell which way to turn. I had promised to pay, and was very anxious to fulfil my promise for good reasons :—my honour and veracity as a minister of the gospel were at stake. I feared that if I did not pay the man, he would send me in the bailiffs ; and for a parson to have the bailiffs would be a terrible disgrace. I read the seventy-third Psalm that morning at family worship, for I thought it was nearest my case ; the mournful portions of God’s word best agree with the feelings of God’s mourning people. I began to

look out texts for the Sunday, but I could not find none, for I could think of nothing but twenty pounds. I tried to read, but it was no use ; the twenty pounds covered all the letters. Twenty pounds seemed written on everything,—on the ceiling, on the walls, in the fire, on my dinner-plates, on the faces of my wife and children,—and the whole of that day was a day of morbid depression of spirits. I was really miserable.

“Saturday morning came, and I arose from a sleepless bed. I ate very little breakfast ; and, when at prayer, I was so overcome with my feelings, that my wife asked me if I was poorly, or in trouble. ‘Yes,’ I replied, ‘I am in trouble enough ;’ and I then told her all about the cause of my sorrow. She was silent for a few minutes, and then said,—‘You have often talked and preached about the power of faith, I think you will now need some yourself.’ Having said this, she rose from her chair, and went rattling amongst her pots and kettles. She was evidently mortified because I had been refused the money by those she had considered our friends.

“My wife is a good Christian woman, but she thinks works are the best evidence of faith both in preacher and people.

“Saturday was spent much as Friday had been. I was in a state of torpor until evening. I then, with a heavy heart, went up stairs into a little room I called my study ; for I had three times to preach on the Sunday and no text, twenty pounds to pay on the Monday and no money. What was I to do ! For a long time I sat with my face buried in my hands, and then I fell on my knees, and I believe I said ‘Lord help me ! Lord help me !’ a hundred times, for I could say nothing but ‘Lord help me !’ While praying

I felt an impression that these words might serve me for one text, and, as Sunday came before Monday, I began to prepare, as well as I could, for the Sunday work ; but no other text could I think of but ‘ Lord help me !’

“ While preaching on the Sunday morning, I had so many thoughts and illustrations, arising out of the subject, that I felt great liberty in preaching. One of my illustrations was about a man I well knew, who was a deacon of a church, and had been an executor for two orphan children. He was tempted to make use of the orphans’ money, and much of it was lost. This so preyed on his mind that he began to drink. He lost his character, lost his peace of mind, and died with the reputation of a rogue. ‘ Now,’ I said, ‘ had this man, the executor, when he first thought of taking the children’s money, resisted the temptation by calling on God to help him,—help him to be honest, help him to do nothing but what a professing Christian ought to do,—instead of losing the money, his good name, his peace of mind, and, perhaps, his life, God would have heard his prayer and saved him.’

“ Noon came ; but my sermon was not half done. I preached from it again in the afternoon, and again in the evening ; and I felt that I could have preached a week from it. So you see the Lord helped me through my work on the Sunday ; and I believe he would, in some way, help me through the Monday.

“ After finishing the night’s service, when I got to the bottom of the pulpit stairs, a young man stood there with his hat in his hand, wishing to see me in private. I took him into the vestry, and requested his errand, expecting it would be something about his soul. For several minutes we were both silent, but at length he said :—

“‘ You knew my mother, Mr. Gadsby.’

“ I looked him in the face, saying, ‘ Surely I did ; but I did not know you at first sight.’

“ ‘ Well, sir, when she died, she left me some money—in fact, all she had, except two small sums she wished me to give ; one sum, of five pounds, to a poor old woman of her acquaintance ; and, speaking of you, she said, Our minister needs help, and I wish you to give him twenty pounds. I paid the five pounds to the old woman ; but, thinking no one knew, I resolved never to give the twenty. But, while you were talking about the roguish executor this morning, I felt thunderstruck, and I have now brought you the twenty pounds. Here it is, do take it, and do forgive me.’

“ It was now my turn to be thunderstruck. I was amazed ; and while the young man was putting the twenty sovereigns into my hand, I trembled all over. God had heard my prayer ; He had helped me through the Sunday, and sent me the twenty pounds for the Monday. It was mine, and I took it. I shook the young man by the hand, and, without putting the money into my pocket, I went quickly home, spread it out on the table before my wife, saying, ‘ Here it is, Here it is ! I now see how it was that I could not borrow the money. God knew where it was, and He has sent me twenty pounds, and delivered me out of my trouble. He has heard my prayer, and helped me, and I will trust Him, and praise Him, as long as I live.’ O ! my dear friends, when that little prayer ‘ Lord help me,’ comes from the heart of one of God’s children in distress, neither men, devils, nor angels can tell its power. It has brought me thousands of blessings beside the **TWENTY POUNDS.**”

ALL IS WELL: OR, WHIT-WEEK.

A GIRL, about fourteen years of age, poorly dressed, but clean, called at my house selling rhubarb. She was one of the many thousands in Lancashire at that time deprived of work by the cotton-famine.

"How much profit will you have when you have sold your stock, my girl?" I asked.

"Fourpence; but I do not get on so fast, for I have been all the afternoon in getting twopence," she replied.

"What will you do with the money?"

"Why, sir, you know it is Whit-Friday next week, and mother and me are trying to get a frock, so that I can walk with the scholars; but I think we shall not manage," she replied, laughing through her tears.

The Tuesday following I met the girl, and the moment she saw me, she said, smiling,—

"I am going to walk on Friday; mother has managed."

Yes, thought I, thousands of mothers have to *manage* for Whit-week, especially those who wish to see their children walk with the scholars.

Whitsuntide! What a thrill of joy does the very name send through the hearts of millions! What dreaming and talking of

Bonnets, frocks, and shawls, ribbons, caps, and parasols!

And, as the time comes nearer and nearer, what busy work amongst the tailors, drapers, dress-makers, and bun-bakers ; what looking out for signs of the weather, to see if the sun goes down in a red or gray sky ; what knocking of weather-glasses, and anxious looking at the castle of the old man and old woman,—and if the old man be coming out, how vexed they feel, and they just touch him with the end of the poker, to see if he will not go quietly back, and send out his old wife to assure them of coming sunshine ! And if the sun goes down in a gray sky, and the weather-glass drops down on the wrong side of change, and the old man—in spite of the warning—will come out, then there are many sad hearts. But if the reverse be the case, those same hearts will instantly be up at “set fair.”

And why all this ? If you be an Englishman you will know why ; but if you be a stranger and a foreigner, stay with us during Whit-week, and, if the weather be fine, we will give you the grandest sights, and sublimest sounds, you will ever see or hear this side of heaven ! O England ! England ! with all thy faults thou standest pre-eminent amongst the nations of the earth. And what has given thee thy high position ? Whigism, Toryism, Radicalism ? No. Romanism, Protestantism, or Dissent, as such ? No. It is thy open Bible, thy genuine Christianity, thy earnest piety, the first-fruits of which are put forth in our Sabbath-schools, springing from the blessed, life-giving influence of that open Bible, giving liberty—social, civil, religious, and commercial. It is righteousness that exalteth a nation, and, doubtless, more or less, that righteousness may be found in all Christian denominations.

Whitsuntide is the special period of the year when the Sunday-schools—those nurseries for the Church and Paradise

—come out into open daylight, filling our streets, lanes, squares, and parks with their various demonstrations of joy ; —banners flying, trumpets sounding, voices singing, headed and marshalled by their beloved ministers and teachers, all partaking of the most happy and joyous emotions, and cheered by sights and sounds, which nerve them afresh to give heart and soul to the tremendous work in which they are engaged.

I well remember the first time I joined one of these Whitsuntide processions. It is an epoch in my history, for I had on a new suit of fustian clothes, with three rows of new, shining bell-buttons, that cost altogether—clothes and buttons—eight-and-sixpence. I am sure the tailor would be glad when he had finished them, I had been so often to inquire about them ; and though I had gone to bed before they were brought home, I quickly got up again to try them on. Whether I slept that night I cannot tell, but I know I rose very early in the morning, washed my hands and face twice over, dressed in my new fustian, bell-button clothes, bright brushed clogs, and a new cap that cost ninepence, with a green ribbon round my neck ; and when we marched out of the school I felt taller that day than I ever did before. Hundreds of spectators lined both sides of the street, and I thought they were all looking at me. One smiling face I am certain was, and that was the face of my mother.

Many years have passed away since I first joined in these processions, and I have many times mingled with their happy gatherings since then. Some of these stand out as memorable events in my life, and one of them is the groundwork of this narrative.

Of the forty counties in England, perhaps Lancashire and Yorkshire bear the palm for numerous and well-conducted

Sunday-schools. England's Queen, in Peel Park, once witnessed what Manchester and neighbourhood could show ; and Halifax recently poured forth its young thousands to welcome the Prince of Wales ; and perhaps nowhere else can such a sight be seen as that in the Piece Hall, at Halifax, on the Sunday-school Jubilee. The sight I witnessed on Monday, in Manchester, was grand and imposing ; but the spectacle of Tuesday, in the Piece Hall, at Halifax, baffled all description.

The moment the train stopped at the station I stepped out of the carriage, and hastened to the place of gathering. Presenting my platform ticket, I sought out the best place for beholding everything that could be seen ; but thousands, similarly disposed, were already crowding the galleries and platform. Nevertheless, I got a good position in the front-centre, and took my place betwixt a stout, farmer-looking gentleman, and two females, evidently sisters, one of whom seemed far advanced in consumption. School after school, headed by waving flags and bands of music, were pouring into the grand open square, through the three arches, every one to the place allotted, a plan of which was in the hands of the various conductors ; the bands passed onward to a wide stage, built expressly for the musicians. On they came, school after school, thousands after thousands, marching up under the various banners, before the eyes of twenty thousand spectators who were ranged round on the higher and lower galleries, all silently looking on. Suddenly the whole multitude burst out into a loud shout, and, amidst the shouting, and shedding of tears, and clapping of hands, the pauper children, from the Union Workhouse, made their appearance. O ! how my soul was moved to its very depths

by this manifestation of feeling from the multitude, and the welcome given those homeless children.

And now comes the grand moment : five hundred brass instruments and forty drums are ready ; twenty-five thousand teachers and scholars are ready ; twenty thousand spectators, with hymns open, are ready : and a great multitude on Beacon Hill—a high mount, half-a-mile from the place, but where the glorious sounds can be heard—are ready. All their eyes are fixed on one man, who, pale with excitement, was to give the signal. The signal was given, and there burst forth the grandest, loudest, sublimest chorus that ever fell on mortal ear, since the Apostle John heard the song of the countless number round the throne. The brilliant sun, from a cloudless sky, poured down his resplendent beams on the worshipping multitude, whose song, ascending to Heaven, mixed with those of the blood-washed throng, to Him who is worthy to receive honour, and glory, and blessing.

The effect on the spectators was amazing. Hundreds wept, and all seemed overwhelmed with astonishment. The farmer-looking gentleman on my right trembled from head to foot. The pale-faced young lady quietly observed to her weeping sister, “What must heaven be ? And what must it be to be there ? I never felt less fear of death than I do at this moment.” The effect on my mind was indescribable, and the pleasing and beneficial influence has been that I have lived it many times over again,—days of joy are pleasures for ever.

But Rochdale, on the Friday, was not the least interesting ; for few towns in proportion to its inhabitants, can boast of more well-attended Sabbath-schools. Our school numbered one thousand scholars ; and, as the time drew

near, they began to assemble from east, west, north and south, bringing with them cheerful looks and smiling faces. And, when they stood four deep, they filled a long street from end to end, headed by their ministers and teachers, and a white silk flag, bearing the motto, "Feed my Lambs,"—while all along, on both sides of the street, were the fathers and mothers, the grandfathers and grandmothers of many of the children, and old scholars, now married, all looking on with pardonable pride. When the procession began slowly to move, all joining, heart and soul, in the well-known and appropriate hymn,—

"Children of Jerusalem
Sang the praise of Jesus' name ;
Children, too, of modern days,
Join to sing the Saviour's praise.
Hark ! while infant voices sing
Loud Hosannas to our King."

Many aprons, handkerchiefs, and coat-sleeves were soon in use amongst the witnessing crowds to dry the falling tear.

The route of our school that day, as it often has been, was arranged to meet the desires of some who had fallen from the ranks, never to join a Whit-Friday procession again. I and my fellow-superintendent, Mr. Schofield, thought it advisable to hasten to the humble cottage of one of our sick scholars to apprise her of our approach. We found her very near her end ; but, at her earnest request, friends had lifted her from her sick-bed, wrapped her carefully up in blankets, and placed her on an elevated chair before the window, in order that she might, as she observed, "see her beloved teachers and scholars once again before she died."

On entering the cottage to tell her they were coming, and

so far lessen the effects of the exciting scene, she said, "Yes, I hear them. O ! how I have besought the Lord to let me live over this day, that I might have a last look before I go to Heaven. He has answered my prayer, and now they are coming. Yes ; they are all coming, singing the hymn I have often joined in. Yes ; they are coming."

As the procession drew nearer, all eyes were turned towards the cottage where Elizabeth Clegg was dying ; for she had long been in the school, and was well known, and highly respected. As they drew up in front of the house, and saw her altered looks, and pale, wasted countenance, many turned aside their heads to weep ; and when, at her request, they sang that beautiful hymn,—

"There is a better world they say,"

Elizabeth's countenance brightened up with raptures of joy. As they moved away, singing—

"O ! that will be joyful !

When we meet to part no more."

Elizabeth, in a whisper, bade them farewell, with a prayer that they might all have the joyful meeting.

After passing through several other streets, we drew near the home of another dying scholar. As in the former case, she had been lifted from her bed that she might once again behold her beloved friends and class-mates. When the echo of their singing announced their approach, she, too, said,—

"They are coming ; they are coming ! Lord, let me live this one hour, and then take me when Thou wilt."

She did live, and at her request they sang—

"'Tis religion that can give

Sweetest pleasure while we live ;

'Tis religion must supply

Solid comfort when we die."

Again, in sadness on the part of the living, and with a smile of peace on the countenance of the dying, they looked a last farewell.

When Addison, in his last moments, sent for his friend and informed him that the reason he had sent for him was, to let him see how a Christian could die, the friend went to see what, with all its drawbacks, is perhaps the most comforting and soul-satisfying sight that mortals are allowed to behold. The *bliss* of dying can only apply to the Christian. There are no really happy deaths without His presence who conquered death ; none but the dead that die in the Lord are blessed. No death is precious in the sight of the Lord, but the death of His saints ; but these *are* precious, and to witness their last moments has strengthened the faith, and confirmed the hope of thousands, both rich and poor. Addison's words are memorable, but not more memorable than many others. Lord Harrington said, " I fear not death, in whatever shape it come ; saving grace has drawn the sting." Lady Hastings could say, when dying, " I would not change my present state for all the world ; one step more and I am in glory." Lord Littleton said, " I was prepared for death before I was afflicted ; and thank God I was, for I have now enough to do to struggle with pain." Dr. Beattie, dying, said, " How pleasant a medicine is Christianity !" Dr. Watts also said, " I fall asleep not caring in which world I may awake ; to live is Christ, to die is gain." Paul said, " There is laid up for me a crown." And Pope wrote no fiction when he described the dying Christian as saying,—

" The world recedes, it disappears,
Heaven opens to mine eyes, mine ears
With sounds seraphic ring."

"Let me die the death of the righteous," was a voice prayer, for terrible is the end of the wicked. What a contrast betwixt the one and the other !

Cardinal Beaufort mournfully said, in his last moments, "And must I die ? Cannot my riches bribe death ? O my poor soul, what wilt thou do !" The Duke Valentinos said, "I have prepared for everything but death, and now I die unprepared." Cardinal Mazarin called out, in his last moments, "O my poor soul, whither art thou going ?" The Duke of Buckingham said, in a letter to a friend, "Pray for the soul of poor unhappy Buckingham." Altamont said, "I have lost heaven, and that will be my worst part of hell." Lord Byron, in his last moments, said, "The worm, the canker, and the grief, are mine alone."

In the above we have a few last scenes in the dying moments of the prepared and unprepared. Millions more are recorded in the memories of the living and the dead, which will be read in the light of eternity ; and we believe many a bright record will come up from those who have left our Sunday-schools. Two dying scholars we have this day seen, who, in their humble homes, looked with cheerful hope to the better land ; and now we visit our third, to witness a scene that will not soon be forgotten.

The house we are now approaching was the home of Miss Anne Marsden, one of the teachers, dying of consumption.

We all know that we must die, and it is perhaps well for us that we have not the ordering of the manner of our death. Every disease claims a large share of victims, but consumption demands an amazing number. Terrible as this messenger of death is to us all, yet it almost universally comes in the most merciful form, giving the longest warn-

ing, and leading its victims the most gently to the tomb. It is probable that millions now in heaven would not have been there had they died of any other malady. I have witnessed many happy deaths, but far more among the lingering, slowly-wasting, gradually-declining, than all others combined. When this messenger of the last enemy comes to seek out his victims, he finds thousands of them dancing the giddy dance of life, engrossed by the vanities and frivolities of the world, with no thought of the world to come ; without God and without hope. He then quietly draws them aside, and gives them time for reflection ; and those reflections have often led to more substantial joys than this world can give, and the feeble, sinking penitent, has been caught up in the arms of mercy. These are amongst the most hopeful of sick-bed penitents ; yet sick-bed repentance is not so satisfactory as repentance in health.

But the two dying young women we have just seen, and she whose home we now approach, had not religion to seek on a sick-bed ; all three were members of the church,—the last-named, especially, had received a Christian education. Her mother died when she was young, and she became the adopted child of her grand-parents. With them she found a happy home, where God was feared, and daily worshipped at the family altar ; and now was seen the fruits of their pious efforts to train her for the skies.

For several days previous to this Friday, she was very anxious that she might have strength to be removed from her bed, and, if possible, carried down stairs, to see all the scholars and teachers pass the window. Friday came, and, as she wished, she was carried down and placed in an easy chair before the drawing-room window, in order that she might have a good look at us all.

As we neared the house,—Hareland's—she heard us singing, and, like her two sick sisters, she smilingly said, "They are coming; yes, they are coming. It will be my last look at them in this world, and they will see me for the last time." As the procession drew up in front of the house the singing subsided, and we formed a half-circle, so that each one could see the dying teacher, as she sat, surrounded by her grandmother and many dear relations, near the window. Hundreds of eyes were fixed on the pale and wasted, but still beautiful face of her who had so often smiled upon them in the Sabbath-school. Scarcely a whisper was heard, for they all felt they were looking for the last time upon that much-loved, but death-stricken teacher.

During the day it had often been my duty to announce the hymn to be sung by the scholars, and when the sick young lady's uncle (who was also one of our teachers) went to ask her what hymn she wished us to sing, she, with a quiet smile, replied, "The seventeenth hymn." I stood on the step waiting for a reply; but when I opened the book and saw the hymn she had chosen, my emotions were so great that it was some time before I could make it known. And what was the hymn? What were the words this departing spirit, so near the invisible world, found to be the most expressive of her own experience in her last moments? They were such as sent a thrill to every soul, and were sung amidst sobs and tears :—

“What's this that steals upon my frame,

Is it death?

Which soon shall quench this vital flame,

Is it death?

If this be death, I soon shall be

From every sin and sorrow free,

I shall the King of Glory see—

All is well.

“ Cease, cease to weep, my friends, for me,
All is well.
My sins are pardoned, I am free,—
All is well.
There's not a cloud that doth arise,
To hide my Saviour from mine eyes,
I soon shall mount the upper skies—
All is well.”

Here was a scene for angels, and one on which angels would delight to look. And here was a scene for those who doubt the power of saving grace to fortify the soul against the fear of death. And here was a scene that would be a most glorious lesson to the hundreds now looking on : they would see how the religion of the Bible, the saving power of the blood of Christ, could take away all fear of death or the grave, for she for whom we all were sorrowing, was the only one who felt no sorrow.

The dying saint was calmly smiling,
While all her friends were round her weeping.

And why ? Yes ; why ? Because *all was well* ; because her sins were pardoned ; because the mists and clouds of the wilderness were all cleared away, and her faith had pierced the clear blue sky of Heaven. Having her glittering crown in view, she could say, “ Do not weep for me, all is well.”

Here, then, we have this amiable young lady, surrounded with everything that can make life desirable ; youth, with youth's buoyant hopes ; wealth, with all that wealth can give ; affectionate relations and friends ; her drawings, music, church and Sunday-school—and, though knowing that in a few hours she would be laid in the cold grave, and her eyes closed on all those objects of love, yet she was bidding them adieu with a smile beaming on her countenance, that told of her unspeakable joy and unutterable peace.

When the farewell hymn was concluded, we silently, and with sad hearts, looked our last look at the dying saint. She was carried back to the bed of death, and in a few days she was laid in her last resting-place. But the dead yet speaketh, for many are still living who joined in the sorrowful parting hymn, and remember how their faith was strengthened, and their own prospects brightened, by seeing the ineffable joy of her who that day showed them how a Christian could die, because her sins were pardoned, and ALL WAS WELL.



MY UNCLE ; OR, JOHNNY'S BOX.

ONE day during last year, I received the following note :
“ Dear Sir,

“ It is with a trembling heart that I ask to see you. I want to see you alone. I am in difficulties and trouble. Would you be my friend ? Please to send an answer by bearer, who is my son. I do hope you will have pity on me.

“ _____.”

“ Tell your mother that I am in my office, and she may see me, if she comes now,” I answered.

In a few minutes the woman made her appearance, but seemed so greatly excited, that, to give her time to recover herself, I turned to the desk, and resumed my work. After shedding a flood of tears, she became more calm, and then said,—

“ I do not know that I have any right to bring you my troubles ; but I am so miserable, that I am afraid I shall lose my reason, if I do not tell some one who can advise me what to do. Some twelve months since, I happened to say to a neighbour that I wished somebody would lend me half-a-crown, when she replied,—

“ ‘ Take your Sunday gown to my uncle’s, and you will soon get your half-crown.’

“ I asked her who *her uncle* was ; when she began to laugh at my ignorance, telling me that ‘ her uncle ’ meant the

pawn-shop, and offering to take the gown there for me. I foolishly consented, and from that day to this I have been in fear and trouble, for I have had nothing but ladeing and teeming, ladeing and teeming."

"What do you mean by ladeing and teeming?" I asked.

"Why, borrowing to pay back what I had borrowed, and borrowing again to pay those I had borrowed from."

"What have you in the pawn-shop now," I inquired.

"Well, sir, I have thirty shillings' worth of my own and other folks'."

"But you surely do not borrow your neighbours' goods to take to the pawnshop, do you?"

"Yes; I have a neighbour's shawl, and her husband's coat. They want them for Sunday, and I have them along with my own things to loose every Saturday, and pawn them again on the Monday morning, to pay back the money I borrowed on the Saturday to loose them with. I receive thirty shillings when I take them, and pay thirty shillings and tenpence-halfpenny when I fetch them back."

"Then you are paying two pounds five and sixpence interest, yearly, for the loan of thirty shillings—nearly two hundred per cent. How do you raise the money? Does some one lend you the whole sum?"

"No. I get three shillings here, five shillings there, two shillings here, and two shillings somewhere else; and I am many times glad of a shilling to make up with. I cannot sleep on Friday night for scheming how I must raise the money for the Saturday."

"Does your husband know about this?"

"No; but I am afraid he will find it out, though part of it has been done to keep him quiet. He is this sort of a man;—however little wages he brings home, if I have not

good meals for him I get nought but abuse, or black looks. When the husband drinks the wife has poor putting on. But if I once get out of the pop-shop, he shall live on potatoes and salt before I will go in again. For it is a low, disgraceful practice, and brings nought but trouble with it. I have borrowed, and borrowed, till I am ashamed to go out of doors. I sometimes pray that God will help me, but I cannot see He can help people that go to pop.shops."

Believing that the woman had been thoughtlessly led into what she truly called a "disgraceful practice," and seeing that she was not yet hardened in the habit, but heartily sick of it, and had not lost all her self-respect; knowing, too, that she was trying to do right, and to appear respectable, she was put in the way of getting out of her troubles.

A few weeks previous to the visit of this woman, a friend came to ask if I could lend a poor neighbour nine shillings, to help her out of a difficulty.

"What is the difficulty?" I asked.

"I will go and tell her that you are in, and she can inform you herself," replied my friend.

In the evening, a stout, healthy-looking woman, with a bold-looking face, and a handkerchief on her head, entered my room, saying she was the person that wanted to borrow nine shillings.

"What do you want it for, mistress?" I asked.

"Well, I can hardly for shame tell you; but I have a big fine lad you', that does nought but cry every Sunday, because he cannot go to the school. I have had him crying three Sundays together, and I am frightened he will run away, as his sister Betty did."

"What does he cry every Sunday about?"

"Why, he is very fond of the Sunday-school, and is really

a fine lad, and a good lad ; but I have had his Sunday clothes in the pawn for a month, and I want you to help me to get them out, for I know you are fond of Sunday-schools."

"Why did his sister, Betty, that you mentioned, run away from home?"

"Well, the truth is, she was as fond of the Sunday-school as he is, and took very good care of her things, and always liked to be decent like the other scholars ; but one day I fastened her best frock, thinking I could get it out again before Sunday, but I could not ; and when I saw her washing herself, and getting ready for the school, I had no heart to tell her, but when she went to the box and could find nothing but her bonnet, she looked straight at me, and then burst out crying. I cried too ; but both of us crying could not get the frock out of pop without brass. That Sunday was a weary day."

"Did she leave home for that?" I inquired.

"Not exactly. We got it out the week after, but I had to pawn it again ; and when she found it out a second time she cried, but did not say much. But when she fingered it, she bundled it up, and went to live with her grandmother, for she said she could not do without her Sunday-school. And yon lad is just like her ; I am expecting he'll be off too."

"Well, mistress, I am glad you have two such children, but I am deeply grieved at your conduct towards them. Thousands of children have been driven to desperation and ruin by such home treatment. But, for the boy's sake, if you will raise part of the money I will find the remainder, so that he can have his clothes by Saturday."

When Johnny heard that his clothes were going to be

liberated he was very glad. On the Saturday noon he came to his dinner, but found none. He looked at his mother, saying,—

“How is this, mother? Where is my dinner?”

“Nay, Johnny; I cannot both find thee a dinner and get thy clothes home, for it will take every farthing I have,” she replied.

“Well, never mind; I had rather be without dinner and have my clothes to go to the Sunday-school,” he answered. And away he went, whistling, to his work again, without dinner.

That night Johnny got some short, strong boards, and made a box. He then got a padlock, and, after putting his clothes into the box, he made it fast, saying,—

“Now, mother, if you *do* pawn them again, you shall pawn the box too.”

In the same month in which these two mothers paid me these visits, I had a third application, much more painful than either of them. A girl, about twelve years of age, with blushing countenance, came to say that her mother had sent her to ask me if I would get her clogs new buttoned, at the same time lifting up one of her feet to show me her bare toes. I gave her a note to the clogger, and I then asked her if she attended the Sunday-school. In a moment tears stood in her eyes, and, holding the slip of paper I had given her in her hand, she looked up, with a face of innocent, deep distress, and replied,—

“I wanted you to ask me that, and I thought you would. But what do you think, Mr. Ashworth? My mother has pawned my little hat, my frock, and my shoes, and now all I have for Sunday is this ragged frock and these broken clogs. O, how I have cried every Sunday since. I used to

be so glad when Sunday came, but now I do not want it to come ; for when I see other girls so nice, going to school, it makes me cry more, and I feel I would give anything if I were like them. And what do you think ?—but you must not tell her that I told you—my mother has actually pawned little brother Johnny's only breeches for sixpence, and he had to lie in bed two days, crying most of the time ; and then she had to give sevenpence for them back, and Johnny was not for taking them off when he went to bed, for fear she would pawn them again when he was asleep."

I said nothing to the child about her mother, but sent my Visitor to inquire, and everything was just as the child had described.

It is astonishing what a degraded influence the habit of pawning has on the minds of those who once begin. Self-respect, and the finer feelings of the soul are soon destroyed. Instead of practicing economy, and trying to do without many foolish, and often hurtful indulgencies, they run to the pawnbroker at every turn, sinking themselves deeper and deeper in poverty and sorrow. It is a well-known fact that about the time of cheap trips, the three-balls have the most custom. Foolish finery, only fit for a few bright days in summer, often finds its way to the pawn-shop. At one of these places there were over fifty white silk bonnets on its shelves at one time, besides a great number of white muslin dresses.

There are a number of travelling drapers, called "Scotchmen," who have had more to do in encouraging this objectionable custom than they will be willing to admit. I have seen these "Scotchmen" enter the homes of poor people, spread out the tempting finery, and, with all their eloquence, try to induce families to purchase, promising long credit, or

to take payments in small amounts. Hundreds and thousands have been induced to buy beyond their means ; and many such, when walking out, dressed in full feather, have called forth such observations as,—

“ There she goes ! ‘ Scotchmen ’ again ! But pop-shop will come next.”

One of these “ Scotchmen ” visited a village called Brockside, near Spotland, where he was trying to push his sale of ribbons, shawls, gowns, &c., &c., and succeeded beyond his expectations. He found long credit, or a shilling a-week customers in almost every house ; but when he returned in a fortnight to receive payment, he saw what he had not before noticed, that nearly all the doors opened in a very primitive way ;—instead of latches, they opened by pulling a string called a “ sneck,” and when it was the “ Scotchman’s ” day, the snecks were all pulled in. He knocked repeatedly at some doors, and kicked at others, but all was silent. He went away, muttering, “ The rogues have pulled in the snecks, but I will send them the bailiffs.

“ Scotchmen’s ” packs, and blazing drapers’ shop windows, have sent thousands of weak-minded women to the pawnshop. Most of these women who pulled in the sneck had pawned their gown-pieces ; for it is a fact that hundreds of new gown-pieces are pawned to raise part of the money to pay for them, and scores of them are never redeemed, but pass into other hands.

One Sunday morning, two of my neighbours were leaning against a flag fence, smoking their short pipes, and in their dirty shirts. They were talking of home matters. One of them remarked to the other,—

“ Our new neighbour has got a nice smart wife, Phillip ; have you seen her ? ”

"Yes, George, and she makes some of our wives look weary sluts, though her husband gets no more wages than we do."

"And have you seen their children, how neat and clean they look?"

"Yes; and I confess I am ashamed when I see them near mine, there is such a difference."

"Do you think that woman ever goes to 'my uncle's'?"

"Nay, there is nought of the pop-shop about yon family. You will see them all going to church directly; and church and chapel-going people have little to do with 'my uncle.' But I think that question is rather too bad, George."

George burst out laughing, for he knew that Phillip's wife was in the habit of going to her "uncle's." This conversation took place near a row of dirty cottages, respecting a neighbour who had just come to reside amongst them. This new tenant had produced quite a sensation; and had become the subject of conversation among the women and children, as well as among the men. When the new tenants here alluded to went to reside in Long Row (as the block of buildings was called), every house was a miserable, wretched-looking dwelling;—few window-blinds, no curtains, no flower-pots, or anything that indicated taste or comfort; but there was plenty of broken windows, broken pots, dirty door-steps, dirty women, dirty children, and swill tubs.

What business poor people have with swill-tubs, I cannot tell. Mr. Fenton, of Bamford Hall, a man supposed to be worth two hundred thousand pounds, was once passing a row of cottages belonging to him: seeing a swill-tub, he lifted the top off, and, with his walking-stick, began stirring up the contents, consisting of pieces of currant-pudding, pie-crust, tea-cakes, mutten-chops, and slices of bread. Calling

out the woman to whom the tub belonged, he asked her if all that had come out of her house.

"Yes, sir," was the reply; "I sell them to a neighbour for her pigs."

"Well," said Mr. Fenton, "there is more waste in that tub than there has been in my house these forty years. You are as sure to come to poverty as you are born."

The middle house in the Long Row, occupied by the new tenant, soon began to shame all the rest. The white window-blind, the neat muslin curtain, the couple of flower-pots, containing a geranium and fuschia, and the clean door-step, presented a wide contrast to their dingy-looking neighbours, and caused no small amount of gossip. If the door was left open, an excuse was made for passing by, to get a peep inside; for some contended it was all outside show; but they soon found that the inside corresponded with the outside.

"There is a vast difference between some women and others in this row. I have five shillings a-week more than the man who has come to live in the middle house; yet his cottage is like a little palace, and mine is like a pig-cote. I wish I had such a wife."

The woman to whom this was spoken made no reply, for she had often been scolded by her husband for not being more tidy. But the example set by the middle house had done more to impress her than all the scolding she had received, and she was secretly making a new muslin curtain and window-blind, for she was determined that her house and children should soon be as smart as those of the new tenants. She gave up gossiping, and minded her own business; and soon a second respectable-looking cottage appeared in the Long Row, and a second church-going family. After that, another, and another, and in less than six months

many of the dwellings became so altered that it was a question which looked the best. But still one retained its dingy and miserable appearance,—the cottage where Philip resided, whose wife was in the habit of going to the pawnshop.

Philip was not one of the best of men, but, no doubt, his wife was partly the cause of it. She never tried to make his home comfortable. He complained that his wages melted away like snow; he could never tell what she did with the money. He could admire the clean, neat, tidy wife of his neighbour, and was grieved to see his own wife such a *dossy*. She was one of those women who think that after they get married it does not much matter how they appear: trailing about all day long slip-shod, with hair uncombed, dress unfastened, and face unwashed, and, altogether, anything but lovely. But such women make fatal mistakes. Men like to see their wives look as pretty as when they courted them. This retains their affection and strengthens their love; but it is impossible for a man to love a slut, and I think sluts scarcely ever get a kiss.

A few weeks since, a grown-up boy was sent by his mother to request I would call and see them, for they were starving and wanted help. I knew the boy and his mother. On entering the house I found everything even worse than I expected. The mother was gossiping in the next house, and the five children were huddled round the hearth, looking the picture of misery. All lived in one room, and slept in one wretched-looking bed: there was only one small table, three chairs—not worth two shillings,—and no fender. The house floor, and the children's faces, looked as if they had not been cleaned for a month.

"Where is your mother?" I asked of the eldest girl, whom I took to be about twelve years of age.

"She is in some of the neighbours' houses ; I will go and see if I can find her," replied the child.

While the sister was gone to seek her mother, I asked her little brother where the sweeping brush was.

"We have none," he answered.

"Well, my lad, will you go next door and ask them if they will lend me a long brush. Now, mind, a long brush—not the hand brush."

The little fellow stared and blushed, but did as I wished him, and soon returned with the long brush. I had just begun work when the girl returned with her mother.

"You see I am sweeping up these bits of straw and shavings, mistress. Perhaps you will let your girl wash and scour the hearth-stone, will you?"

"We have no sand or stone," the girl replied.

"Well, take this penny and fetch a small stone and some sand ; and you, my girl, will you wash your hands, arms, and face, and comb your hair, while your sister goes for the scouring-stone?"

"We have no soap," replied the girl.

"No soap ! then take this twopence, and get half-a-pound of soap, and then you, and your two brothers and sister can all be washed. When were you washed last?"

"On Sunday," was the reply. It was now Friday.

While the washing and scouring was going on, and after I had done sweeping, I turned to the mother, a tall, stout, strong, and healthy woman, who was looking very sheepish, and said,—

"Do your children go to any school, mistress?"

"No, none of them, for I have had to fasten all their decent things for bread," she replied.

"You mean you have taken them to the pawn-broker?"

"Yes."

"And is that all the bed you have for five?"

"Yes."

"And where are the blankets? Have you pawned them?"

"Yes."

The sand and stone were soon at work, and the four little brothers and sisters were soaping their hands, arms, and faces round the slop stone, out of the porridge pan, for the elder sister had the mug to clean the hearth. How their faces were wiped I must not tell, only that one of the boys wiped his on his mother's gown as she stood there.

After the washing, I requested them to comb their hair, and divide it neatly; but the eldest girl, who had done the hearth and was now washing her face said,—

"We have no comb."

I took one out of my pocket, and lent it; but though I often lend combs, I always decline receiving them back. The change in the house, and especially among the shining faces, was marvellous. Turning to the mother, I asked how many things she had in pawn, and for how much?

"I have both clothes and furniture in, and some of the tickets are sold."

"Well, now, I will call to see you again in a few days; and if I find your house and you and your children clean,—for cleanliness is much cheaper than dirt,—I will buy you a new bed. Send the children to the infant-school now, and I will pay for them. In fact if you will do your best, I will be your friend."

I did call again in about a week after, but everything was as bad and dirty as before. The children had only gone to the infant-school two days, for the mother would not take the trouble to make them fit to go.

I left the house with a sad heart, for what hope was there of the poor innocent children?—their mother's ignorance and idleness was blasting all their prospects in life. When a woman begins to go to "my uncle's" it is a poor look out, and it would be well if the children of such women had their Sunday clothes in JOHNNY'S BOX.



OLD ADAM.

ONE of our Rochdale doctors, being asked by a friend if some of his doings were not likely to exclude him from heaven, replied :—

“When I die, I shall take with me an old book I have, which is full of debts owing to me by the poor, whom I have never distressed for payment, and show it at the gates of heaven ; when they see it they will say, ‘ Admit him, he is a decent fellow.’ ”

This shocking expression of the doctor’s reminded me of one of my neighbours, who, with several others, attended our village shaving-shop on Sunday mornings, to talk politics, read the newspaper, and rule the nation. His name was Adam Schofield. Adam, like the doctor, may be taken as a fair type of many persons found in almost every part of the country. He believed in eating, working, sleeping, and grumbling, and lived as if these were all for which a man was born. Once or twice in his life-time he went to Town Meadows Chapel, to hear Mr. Stephens ; but his opinion was, that church and chapel-going people must be rather bad, to require so much preaching and praying to keep them right.

After finishing his day’s work, Adam often found his way to our fireside, to have what he called “a chat” with my father. One evening, addressing my mother, he said, “Do

you not think a man may get to heaven without going to either church or chapel?"

"I do not think that any person wishing to go to heaven would ask such a question. They will be very glad to go to either church or chapel if it would help them one step on the way," replied my mother.

Adam was silent a few minutes, and then said, "Well I think God takes the average of men's actions, and I shall have as many good deeds to show as will get me out at the right end."

This was Adam's estimation of himself, though he *then* confessed that he sometimes got drunk, and, when in a passion, could swear a round oath, and sometimes tell an untruth.

For many years after I had left the village, I often thought about Adam; for ever since I understood the Bible's teachings of how a sinner must be saved, I had regarded him as far from the kingdom of heaven.

I, somehow, became so concerned about him, that I set out purposely to pay him a visit, though his house was two miles from mine. He was seated by the fire, and alone. He seemed glad to see me, requested I would take a seat, and asked me if "there was ought fresh or new."

I began to tell him what my errand was;—how concerned I had felt about his soul;—and how I had often heard him talk in a way that convinced me he was not a Christian, and, having much respect for him for my father's sake, had come all the way expressly to see and converse with him about his salvation.

For several minutes Adam looked into the fire without speaking; at last he said,—

"I think, John, you might have found hundreds, between

here and your house, a deal worse than I am. I don't know why you should be so concerned about me ; I think I am as good as many that pretend to be better."

"That is what I expected and feared you would say, Adam, and it is what makes me so concerned about you. If you felt yourself a sinner, you would seek for a Saviour ; but so long as you think you are not a sinner, there is no hope for you. You are very like several persons that I have seen and heard of, and if you will allow me, I will tell you about some of them, Adam."

"If it will not take long you can go on," he replied.

"Well, I will give you the case of an old man. One Sunday, as I was going to Shaw, near Oldham,*on ascending the rising ground leading from Buersill to High Crompton, I saw him toiling slowly up the road. On overtaking him, and after the usual observations about the weather, I fell into the old man's speed, observing,—I can walk up this brow much better than you, my old friend.

" 'Wait until you are seventy-two years of age, and then see what you can do,' he replied.

"How much farther have you to go ?"

" 'Not far. I am coming from church, but it is getting a long way for me to go now, and I think I shall not be able to go much longer.'"

"I am glad to hear you say you have been to church this morning, and that you are preparing for your latter end ; for I never see an old man, or an old woman, but I think they are not far from either heaven or hell.

" 'Well, as for that, I think I shall stand as good a chance as most folk, for I've attended church, at times, for forty years, always paid my way, and I don't know that I've done anybody any harm ; what more do yo' want ?' "

“Then, during forty years, every time you have attended church, you have told a lie, or missed that part in your prayer-book which says, ‘We have done the things which we ought not to have done, and left undone the things which we ought to have done Lord have mercy upon us, miserable sinners,’ because you have just made it out that you are no sinner, but a decent sort of a man ?

“ ‘I cannot walk up this hill so fast, you had better go on without me,’ he said, leaning his arm on a gate to rest. I, too, leaned on the gate, and looking him in the face, said,—My dear old brother, I know why you want me to leave you, but I dare not until I have warned you of your danger. The Bible says all have sinned, and if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and unless we repent we shall be lost for ever ! A man must be born again or he can never enter heaven. And here you are, an old man of seventy-two years of age, attending the church, at times, for forty years, and yet you are as blind as a bat, and as surely going to hell as you lean upon that gate. The moment you spoke of your goodness, you made me miserable, for I then knew that you are what the Bible calls a Pharisee, and Pharisees never go to heaven. The Lord have mercy upon you, for you are a miserable sinner.

“During my short speech, the old man seemed amazed and restless, and begged I would leave him, for I had made him uneasy. I did as he requested ; but before leaving I again told him, as kindly as I could, that he was a sinner, and unless he repented he would never see heaven. That is one case, Adam.

“Another case, somewhat similar to this, occurred about the same time. I was sent for to see one of my neighbours,

When I went up stairs I found him propped up in bed, and looking very poorly.

“‘I am glad you are come, Mr. Ashworth, for I wanted to have a little talk with you ; but you know I have not been as bad as some.’

“‘No, John,’ said his wife, ‘there are thousands worse than you are.’

“‘I have never been much of a swearer,’ continued the man.

“‘No, John,’ said his wife, ‘nobody can say that about you.’

“‘I have not been a drunkard ; I have been drunk ; but not as often as some.’

“‘No, John,’ said his wife, ‘you have been anything but a drunkard, as some are.’

“‘I have had thousands of pounds passed through my hands belonging to others, but have always been honest.’

“‘Yes, John, you have always been honest to the penny.’

“‘I have sometimes gone to church,’ continued the man, ‘or I have sat in the house and read, for I never could bear to see people wickedly spending the Sabbath.’

“‘Yes, John,’ again said his wife, ‘you have stopped at home many a time, and read the newspaper, or a book for me, instead of going out when any of your companions have called.’

“During the whole of these observations I had not spoken one word. But when they had finished, I quietly took up my hat, and said, ‘Well, I will go home, there is no need for me here ; Christ did not die for you.’

“‘Christ did not die for me ! How so ?’

“I mean what I say. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners only, but according to the statement of you

and your wife, you are no sinner, but a very good man. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; and as you make it out, and your wife confirms it, that you are a very righteous man, then Christ cannot have died for you, so I must bid you a good day, for I can be of no use if I remain.

“ ‘Do not go, do not go, for I have been very miserable for several days, and I want something.’

“ ‘Yes, John, you want those rotten props knocking down, and if they are not knocked down you will as sure be lost as you are in that bed.

“ ‘Well, what must I do? I am willing that you should tell me, for I cannot bear to think that Christ did not die for me.’

“ ‘Well, John, just answer me a few questions. Have you ever taken God’s name in vain?

“ ‘Yes, many times, many times.’

“ ‘Then the Lord declares that swearers cannot enter heaven. Have you ever been drunk? I think you have.

“ ‘Yes, I have, many a time.’

“ ‘Then the Lord declares that no drunkard shall enter heaven. Have you not had wicked thoughts, such as lust, envy, malice, hatred, or revenge?

“ ‘Yes, thousands of times.’

“ ‘Well, then, the Bible tells us that only the pure in heart shall see God. So, you see, all along you have been deceiving yourself, and depending on your good works. You admit you have broken the law, and unless you get forgiveness through Christ, you perish. That is another case.

“ ‘You knew old James Nuttall, Adam, did you not?’

“ ‘Yes; I knew old James,’ he replied.

“Well, good old James, who for many years went about visiting the sick and relieving the poor, once had two shillings given him to take to a sick dressmaker. On knocking at the door a feeble voice called out, ‘Come in.’ Old James walked in, and in one corner of a large room of a very clean house, he found the sick dressmaker confined to bed. He told her he had got two shillings, sent by a friend, for her. She soon stopped him by saying,—

“ ‘Old man, it is not me you are seeking, it is some one else, so you had better take it to the right place.’

“The old man, thinking he was right, asked her if she was a dressmaker, and if there was any other person of the same name in the neighbourhood.

“ ‘Yes, I am a dressmaker, and the only person in the neighbourhood of that name.’

“ ‘Then it is for you, and I will leave it on the mantelpiece; and I always like to pray, both with sick people and healthy ones, if they will let me.’

“While old James was saying this, he took off his hat, and laid it on a chair. He reared his stout walking-stick in the corner, near the sick woman’s head, and, kneeling down, prayed that the Lord would bless the sick and poor, that He would pardon the woman all her sins, and make her happy. While he was praying, the woman took hold of the stout walking-stick, and lifted it up, intending to bring it down on his smooth, shining, bald head with a crash, for daring to call her a sinner; but her hand was withheld by the old man’s God, and the self-righteous dressmaker, was, probably, saved from being a murderess. When he rose from his knees, she began to abuse him, saying, ‘Who told you that I was a sinner? I am as good as either you or them, and I do not thank you for either your prayer or your money.’

Me a sinner, indeed ! Where you find one better you will find a thousand worse, and I hope you will not call here again.' Old James, looking at the woman with surprise and sorrow, replied,—

“ ‘The money was given to me for you, and I will leave it ; and I will pray for you when I get home, that the Lord will open your blind eyes, and soften your hard heart, for you need both, I am sure.’

“ This woman recovered from her sickness, and became a member at Hope Chapel ; but she told a different tale about her goodness the day she was admitted into the Church.

“ One more case, Adam, and then I have done.

“ One evening, a rough character came to my house, urgently requesting that I would go with him to see an old woman who was very poorly. I at once went, and, on entering the house, found her sitting up in bed, moaning, and very restless.

“ ‘ You have sent for me to come and see you,’ I observed to the old woman.

“ ‘ Nay, I have not, nor did I want you. I am not going to die, I have only got the cholic, and I shall soon be better ; I will have none of your talk, nor your prayers,’ said the old woman.

“ ‘ Old Mary, you should not talk that way to Mr. Ashworth, he comes for your good,’ said the man who had fetched me.

“ ‘ Hold thee thy noise, thou scamp ; I am as good as thee, thou devil, or as anybody in this street, or the next street to it. I will send for some one to pray with me when I am going to die, and not till then ; half an hour will do for that.’

“ The old woman was soon better, and walking about as

usual. But one night, when she had got to the top of the stairs, she lost her balance ; there was one wild scream, and a crash, and she lay dead at the bottom of the stairs. A regard for the feelings of her son and daughter prevents me from giving the name."

After giving the above cases, I waited to hear what Adam would say, but he made no reply. When on the point of leaving, I felt very nervous, and thought, shall I ask Adam to let me pray with him, or would it be more prudent to leave him without doing so? I asked him, but his reply was,—

"No, John, what little I do in that line, I can do for myself."

"Will you have this little book, then? It is good print, and, I think, you will find something that may interest you."

"Well, yes, you may leave the book, and I can see what it is about."

I laid the little book, called "Come to Jesus," on the table, bidding Adam good night, and for many weeks saw no more of him. Having to pass through the village, however, on some business matters, I again called, and found him, as before, alone. On the table near him lay the little book, but backed afresh with some blue sugar paper. The moment I saw the book had been covered afresh, I felt convinced that there was a change somewhere else beside the book back. "So you see I have called again, Adam. How are you getting on since I last saw you?" He pointed to a chair, requested me to sit down, and at once began to tell me he had long wanted to see me, for he had spent some very miserable hours since I last called, and had come to the conclusion that he should be lost.

"I am glad such is the case, Adam. Now I have hope

concerning you ; for Jesus Christ came to seek and save that which was lost."

"So this little book says. There is no nonsense about this book ; it is all out of the Bible. I have been like the man you mentioned, all my life resting on rotten props, but this book has knocked them all down, and I am now almost in despair."

I drew my chair nearer to where Adam sat, and, laying my hand on his knee, said,—“ Do you now think that you are better than others, and that your good deeds outweigh your bad ones ? ”

“ O dear, no, I feel ashamed that ever I talked that way, to you or any one else.”

“ Do you still think there is too much preaching, praying, and Bible reading, as you once did ? ”

“ O dear, no, I have read the Bible more, and, in my way, prayed more the last two months than I have done for twenty years before.”

“ Do you now think you are a sinner, Adam ? ”

“ I am sure I am, and a great sinner. Whatever shall I do ? ”

“ Do you *feel* you are a sinner ? for there is a vast difference between merely believing we are sinners, and feeling we are sinners.”

“ Yes, I feel that I am, and feel it so keen that it sometimes makes me sweat.”

“ Well, now, do you feel that Christ can save you ? ”

“ Why, He has saved millions, and He ”——

“ Here Adam burst into tears, in which I could not help joining him.

“ Do you believe that he will save you, Adam ? ”

“ I hope He will,” was his reply, still weeping.

"Just one step more, Adam. Do you believe Christ will save you now, just now? For, you know, if ever a man's sins are forgiven, there is a moment when forgiveness takes place, and when that moment comes he can say 'O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me.'"

Adam buried his face in his hands, and began sobbing like a child. I was deeply moved, and, for some time, we were both silent. At length Adam said,—

"What must I do! what must I do! I believe Christ died for sinners, and that He can save sinners, and does save sinners, and that He will, perhaps, save me, but I do not think He will save me yet."

"Then Adam, you will never be saved until you believe that God, for Christ's sake, will save you, and with a *present* salvation. The promise, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' does not mean believe to-morrow, and be saved to-morrow, but *now*. 'Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.' It is one of the devil's best stratagems, to make penitent sinners believe that Christ will not save them now. But, Adam, there are no promises of salvation for to-morrow."

Adam still held down his head, and seemed in great trouble. When I rose to go, he begged I would pray with him, and ask God to have mercy upon him. We prayed together, and not without hope that God heard our prayer. I then shook hands with him, and, at his request, promised to call again soon, thankful in my heart that the once self-righteous Pharisee was now the humble penitent, pleading for mercy.

Adam still sought pardon, still studied the Bible and read the little book called "Come to Jesus," attended the house

of God regularly, and the week-day prayer-meetings held in the neighbourhood, and before I saw him again he was a sinner saved by grace, and a very happy child of God. His regular attendance at the means of grace, and his consistent Christian life, were strong evidence that the change was real. Speaking with him on one occasion about his former self-righteous views, and the difference betwixt those days and the time he was seeking pardon and mercy, he exclaimed,—

“When I saw myself what I was, and what I had been on the day I obtained mercy, I believed and felt that if my sins of heart and life had been spread out, they were enough to damn all the people in Rochdale.”

The evidence of saving faith is a life of holiness, and Adam endeavored to live that life; he was indeed a brand plucked from the burning, and his sun was going down in a clear sky. He loved his Bible, loved to talk with religious people, loved the House of God, and, with child-like simplicity, spoke of his entire dependence on Christ as the only foundation of his hope.

One fine Sabbath morning I was going to my engagements, and had to pass the house at Cutgate where Adam still resided. My old friend Niff was looking out for me, for he was anxious I should call to see Adam, who was now very poorly. On entering his poor, but clean cottage, I was very glad to find that I was not too late, for on approaching his bed, he still knew me, and our hands were soon locked together. With a feeble whisper, and with a great effort, he spoke of his great joy and peace, and thanked me that I had ever come to tell him of his danger, saying, “It was the best day’s work you ever did. Had I remained a self-righteous Pharisee I should have been lost, but now, by

the grace of God, and faith in Jesus Christ, I am just entering heaven.

On returning in the evening, I again called to see my dying friend, but on entering the house found the spirit had winged its way to the invisible world. I laid my hand on his now cold forehead, and, while my breast was heaving with emotion and my eyes rained down tears, I thanked God for his goodness and mercy in opening the eyes of the poor old man, and blessing him with saving grace.

That day Adam went to where there are millions of converted publicans and sinners, but where there is not one self-righteous person, for there is no Pharisee in heaven, nor ever will be while heaven is heaven ; but amongst the millions of sinners saved by grace around the throne of God will now be found the soul of my happy friend, OLD ADAM.



ELLEN WILLIAMS AND THE "BLACK MAN."

FEW persons witness more weeping and tears than falls to my lot to behold almost daily, but especially on the Sunday evening, when, after the service at the "Chapel for the Destitute," groups of poor, miserable, wretched creatures, homeless, friendless, and penniless, stand, with dejected looks, waiting for an opportunity to speak to me. No doubt, some of these pitiable objects are the authors of their own sufferings, and are reaping what they have sown. Nevertheless, there they are, human beings; every man and woman of them are my own brothers and sisters, and the deeper they are sunk in depravity, the more they stand in need of our sympathy.

One Sunday evening, fourteen of these strangers stood waiting for my appearance. Five of them consisted of a man, his wife, and three children; three others, men professedly on tramp,—two of the three without coats; four others were elderly persons, all with pitiable tales to tell; and the last two were females, one of them, who was dressed in a seedy black silk, had a good address. She made a nice curtsy, begged my pardon, and, while wiping the tears from her eyes, assured me that she had been so deeply impressed with the service of the evening, that she had vowed to return to her native place and lead a new life,

but finished by requesting me to bear the expense of her journey. The last of the fourteen is the subject of this narrative. She was about forty years of age ; the broken bonnet on her head had once been white straw, her shawl was thin and dirty, her printed dress in rags, and her feet almost without shoes ; she was weeping bitterly, and was the only one of the whole group whose sorrow seemed to be real. After disposing of the polite woman in seedy black silk, I turned to the ragged, sobbing creature that stood waiting her turn, observing,—

“ Well, my good woman, you want to speak to me.”

“ Yes, sir, but I am ashamed to speak to you,” was her reply.

“ I suppose you are a stranger in Rochdale ; have you ever attended this place before ?”

“ No, sir, I left Oldham this afternoon, and when I came into this town, I did not know what to do, or where to go. I spoke to a lady, and she advised me to come to your Chapel, and said that if I saw you after the service, you would perhaps provide me with lodgings somewhere.”

“ Do you belong to Oldham ?”

“ No, sir, my native place is near Hyde, but I have not been there lately.”

“ And what makes you weep so bitterly ?”

“ O, sir ! I was formerly a Sunday-scholar and teacher, and regularly attended a place of worship ; and while you were singing the first hymn to-night, the thought of those happy days came rushing back to my mind, and filled my soul with agony. O ! to think of what I was then, and what I am now.”

“ Have you no relatives or friends ?”

“ I have relatives and acquaintances, but no friends.”

"What is your trade?"

"I formerly worked in the mill, but have been out of work for some time ; but the fault is my own."

"I think I understand you ; here is a ticket for a night's lodging, and call on me to-morrow ; perhaps you may get work in the neighbourhood."

She called the following day, told me her name, and gave me a short account of her life ; and then came out the secret of her misery and wretchedness,—she was a drunken woman.

A drunken woman, what a sound ! and what thoughts does that sound awaken ! A drunken woman ! Of all the painful, sickening sights in this world the sight of a drunken woman is the most painful, the most sickening. When a woman begins to drink, farewell to everything that makes a woman lovely ; farewell beauty, farewell modesty, farewell virtue and chastity, farewell self-respect. If she be a young woman, farewell all bright prospects in this world ; if she be a married woman, farewell all love and respect from her husband, even though he be a drunkard—farewell all domestic joys and all hopes of prosperity. To a drunkard, either man or woman, the sun is gone down at noon-day—but especially to a drunken woman.

Strong as the above expressions may seem, the following, I think, will prove them true :—

On the same form on which Ellen sat the first night she attended the "Destitute," there was an old woman who begged that I would go and see her son, who was very poorly. I followed the weeping mother to the home of her dying first-born, and there found six young children seated on the floor, round the fire, all silent and sad. I spoke kindly to the oldest, a girl about ten years of age, for I remembered how the mother of these children had, a few weeks before,

left them a whole day without food, while she was drinking, and how this girl had found a little flour, baked a cake on the oven-tin over the fire, and shared it with her little hungry brothers and sisters.

On going up stairs I found the father in terrible suffering; the moment he saw me, he stretched out both his hands, exclaiming,—

“O! sir, is not this dreadful? You have often told us at the chapel, that there is enough to do on a sick-bed without having to seek mercy, and now I find it true.” Looking at his mother, he said,—

“Mother, fetch all the children up, and let them kneel round the bed.”

When he saw them all round his bed weeping, he said,—

“O! my God, what a sight. What will become of you with such a mother? I wish we might all be buried in one grave on the same day, and then you would all go to heaven. Kneel down, my dear children, kneel down, and Mr. Ashworth will pray for you, and for your erring mother, and dying father.”

We all knelt down; the trembling grandmother, the erring wife, and helpless children, sobbing and weeping. I closed my eyes on the scene, for I was not able to bear it, and, with choking utterance, pleaded with that God who hears the cries of the poor and distressed. In seven hours from that moment the man expired, and six children were left in the care of a drunken mother. When she got the club-money for her husband's funeral she commenced drinking, and never left off until every farthing was spent. This miserable woman was a fit companion for the poor, wretched Ellen.

And how did Ellen Williams become a drunken woman?

Hear the answer, ye young, unmarried women of England ! Ellen kept company with a young man who was a tippler, who went to visit her with a small bottle of rum in his pocket, to let her have a drop in her tea, and when Ellen walked out with her sweetheart, they often called at public-houses to have just one glass ; so, by keeping company with a tippler, having drops of rum in her tea, and calling at public-houses on their walks, Ellen began to like drops of rum.

Any young woman who goes with her intended into a public-house before they are married, deserves a drunken husband ; and if she goes with him after, she deserves no pity.

These drops of rum in tea have made sad havoc in thousands of homes, they have made myriads of thin, pale-faced, ragged children, and myriads of dirty, slatternly, red-nosed mothers. A poor woman called at my door one Saturday evening, to inform me that herself and children were starving. I gave her a little help, and the day after unexpectedly called to see her. I found her and another woman having tea together, and the little pitcher with the drop of rum stood on the table. When they saw me the faces of both went red, whether from the drop of rum, or my unexpected visit, I cannot tell,—perhaps from both. The following day she again called, with a large woollen stocking around her face, looking very pitiful, and informed me that she had been bad of the tooth-ache, and that was the reason she had a little rum, and she hoped I would think nothing about it.

“ But you looked very merry with your tooth-ache when I called,” I replied.

“ Why, just then I did ; yo’ seen, one cannot always be crying.”

While on this point I will mention another fact. There was formerly in this town a good old man, who for many years spent the whole of his time in visiting the poor, the sick, and the dying; his name was James Nuttall, but he was best known as Jemmy Nutta'. He was a good man, and highly respected; his friends frequently furnished him with money and clothing to give to really needy cases; and for many years he did great good in the town and neighbourhood.

Three women, who wanted a drop of rum in their tea, laid a deep but wicked scheme to get the money to purchase it. They agreed that one should go to bed and pretend to be very poorly, but as she did not look sufficiently sick as she lay in bed, they rubbed her face with flour, minding to lay it on evenly. One acted as nurse to the pretended invalid, while the other went to fetch Jemmy Nutta' to pray with her. Of course the old man went, prayed with them, and gave the poor sick woman a shilling to get a little beef tea. The moment his back was turned, they all burst out laughing; they had got the drop of rum for their tea.

For several days I took charge of Ellen, provided her food and lodgings, and furnished her with a few decent clothes; and, much sooner than I expected, she got partial employment. She attended regularly all the services, and became, in appearance, a greatly altered woman. She was now an abstainer from what had been to her the greatest curse, her *one* besetting sin. Once again she could join in singing God's praises, and once again her face was lit up with bright smiles; none of my poor acquaintances greeted me more cheerfully in the street, nor seemed to enjoy more the means of grace.

When talking with Ellen, on one occasion, about her

happy change, she informed me that she had got entirely rid of the "black man."

"What do you mean by the 'black man'?" I enquired.

"Why, sir, when I was a drunkard, and living a wicked life, I was always miserable; I did everything I could to smother my conscience, and quench the strivings of God's Spirit,—sinking deeper and deeper in sin. One moonlight night, as I was walking the street, more unhappy than usual, I thought there was a tall man following close behind me. I turned round, and round, but still he was behind. I stood still, and looked over my left shoulder, and saw a sight that I never shall forget to my dying day."

"But I suppose it was all imagination?"

"I don't know that; I have seen him many times since that night, always looking over the same shoulder, with exactly the same terrible fierce look, and awful black face."

"Did he speak to you?" I asked.

"Yes, always; and he always said the same words, or nearly the same."

"And what are the words?"

"He said, 'Put an end to your life, hang yourself, drown yourself, take poison.' He always told me to commit suicide some way."

"And how did you get rid of this terrible 'black man'?" I asked.

"O, I have not seen nor heard him since I entirely gave up drink, and began to pray. So long as I pray, and feel that God hears my prayer I never fear him; he is like that evil Spirit mentioned in the Bible,—when Jesus comes, he goes away."

Either the moralist or the the physiologist will be able to understand why the "black man" was looking over Ellen's

shoulder, and prompting her to self-murder. She had, in the first place, left the path of piety and peace, and by her wicked life disordered both body and mind, and—however it may seem to us, who, to some extent, understand the real cause—to Ellen it had all the force of a dreadful reality : to her he was a real, fierce “ black man.”

Various minds are variously affected while under these awful influences caused by drink, but in all cases it is fearful. A few days ago, a pale-faced, handsome woman came to my office, and wanted me to hear her make a vow to God, that she would never touch another drop of drink as long as she lived. I had great difficulty to prevent her going on her knees to make the vow. I told her that all the vows she could make to man would be utterly useless, but if, when she felt her one besetting sin trying to get power over her, she would again and again seek help from heaven, and make her vow before God, and ask strength to keep it, there would be hope for her. She seemed in great mental agony, the consequence of her last excess in drink.

This same woman, a few days before, came to request I would buy a frock for her daughter (a girl about twelve years of age), that she might be decent to go to a nursing-place she expected for her in a few weeks. I promised that if she would not go into a public-house, and leave off drink for one fortnight, I would buy her child a frock. She promised, and at the end of the time the girl came for the frock.

“ Well, my child, I wish to fulfil my promise to your mother, but do you not know that she was drunk on Saturday and Sunday nights ? ”

The child did know ; and I shall not soon forget the look of shame and anguish depicted in that child’s countenance. O how I did feel for the poor thing, but I durst not trust

the mother a new frock, knowing that she would have sold it for drink. When I asked the woman how she became a drunkard, she replied, that for several years her husband, who earned good wages, had two or three pints of ale on the Saturday night, and every night had a pint to his supper, and she always fetched it; that she got a gill for herself while they were measuring the husband's pint, and so began to like it.

The same week that the sorrowing girl lost her new frock because of her mother, I was returning home about half-past ten at night, and at the bottom of Foundry Brow, or George street, I saw a boy and girl, dripping wet, and both crying. On asking what was the matter, they told me the door was locked, and they could not find their mother, who had the key.

"How long have you been seeking her?" I asked.

"Since seven o'clock, but cannot find her," they replied.

I looked the little girl in the face, I thought I knew her, and asked her if she knew me.

"Yes," was the answer from both.

Poor, little, weeping, wet, hungry, benighted creatures,—they were seeking a drunken mother!

But to return to Ellen. None but those who watch for souls can form a right conception of what I feel at this moment. Whilst I am attempting to depict these facts, the whole circumstances pass afresh before me. My Scripture-reader informed me that he thought he had seen Ellen in questionable company, and that he was afraid she was again neglecting her duties. I had myself missed her from some of the services, but as she had been so orderly and regular for many months, I thought there was a reasonable cause. But one Sunday morning I met her in the street, and then

at a glance saw how matters stood. She tried to avoid me, but I at once crossed the street, and met her face to face.

"Ellen, you are not looking well; surely you have not forsaken us, and are losing all you have recently gained by your good conduct! How is it you have such a strange appearance—you seem as if you had not been in bed last night?"

Poor Ellen was speechless, she hung down her head, and tried to hide her tears.

"You will soon see the 'black man' again, I am afraid, Ellen."

She threw up her arms, and, with a wild look, exclaimed "He is with me now!" and ran swiftly away from me.

Here I must make a confession, and I do it with bitterness and sorrow. A few weeks before the period of which I now write, Ellen was again out of work, and I had to render her considerable help. One day she came to inform me that she could have a nursing place—to do nothing but take care of two or three children, if I would merely say in a note or by my Visitor, that I knew her. She got the place; but had I known what I do now, she must not have gone. A man—whose name, for the sake of his father and grandfather, I suppress—found out the woman's weakness, tempted her, promised her marriage, and induced her to live with him. They sinned and drank together.

Once or twice she came to the chapel on the Sunday, and sometimes on the week-evening, but she was a greatly altered person. Both myself and Scripture-reader tried to reclaim her, but she avoided talking with us, and still went on drinking.

One Sunday evening I stood at the chapel door when

Ellen was entering. She came up to me, and, in a strange, careless manner, said,—

“The ‘black man’ is behind me; do you not see him? He has been with me all the week, and he follows me wherever I go. As I was passing over the wood-bridge last night, he said,—‘Now, now, this is a nice spot for you to drown yourself: do it now, do it now!’ And if a person had not come past at the time, I should have done it, for I felt as weak as a child, and had no power over myself.”

“But you told me that you always got rid of the ‘black man’ when you gave up drink and prayed earnestly: have you given up praying, Ellen?”

“Yes! I seldom pray, for the ‘black man’ laughs at me, and says it is no use; and all the way he has kept saying,—‘You need not go to the chapel—it is no use, no use.’”

“Have you had drink to-day; you seem as if you had, Ellen?”

“Not much, and the ‘black man’ persuaded me. What must I do? Remember me in your prayers to-night, for I feel as if I could not pray.” She then moved on into the chapel.

Poor Ellen! It was no wonder she could not pray, she was living in sin, and knew it. To be indulging in anything that we know to be sinful, to sin when we know we are sinning, and yet pretend to pray, is mocking God. “Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy.” But it is declared that, if we regard iniquity in our heart, God will not hear our prayer, and that is the reason why thousands pray in vain; they acknowledge their sins, but do not forsake them. This was Ellen’s case, and it was this that had brought her to the dreadful condition she was now in.

The man who induced her to leave her place of service, very soon turned his back upon her, and left her to herself. For some time she rambled about the town without any settled residence, and at last went to live at No. 14, Greenwood street. I often saw her pass my office, and every time she seemed sinking deeper and deeper ; her appearance was rapidly becoming what it was the night she was weeping at the "Destitute." Drink she was determined to have, at any and every cost, and, the last time I had any conversation with her, she told me that the grinning, fierce, "black man," was almost always with her, urging her on to commit self-murder.

One night she remained out drinking very late. When she returned to her lodgings, she was wild with excitement, exclaiming,—"He will finish me yet, he will finish me yet !"

"Who will finish you ?—what do you mean ?" asked Mrs. Cartwright, the woman with whom she lodged.

"The 'black man,' the terrible 'black man.' Do let me go to bed, and come, kneel down and pray for me."

"God will not hear either your prayer or mine, we are both too bad for that," said Mrs. Cartwright, bursting out weeping.

"Pray, pray, do pray," cried Ellen, "the 'black man' will go away if we pray."

They both knelt down. Ellen was miserably drunk, and her wild screams were awful. And the whole of that night was an awful night.

In the morning, she began to sing a strange, wild song. So strange, plaintive, and melancholy were the words and the tune, that, to use Mrs. Cartwright's own words, they made her weep, and the flesh creep on her bones. A short

time after the wild, plaintive song was finished, Mrs. Cartwright heard an unusual sound, and, running up stairs, she found Ellen on the floor in the agonies of death ; she had taken strong poison, and in a few minutes was a corpse.

Poor Ellen ! thy voice, now silent, once sweetly mingled with the thousands of the Sabbath-school, and joined the praises in the house of God ; then happiness was thine, but thou forsook those paths of pleasantness and peace. Thy one besetting sin withered and blasted all thy hopes, and in thy wild despair thou perished, madly perished by thine own hand ; and now thou art gone, gone down to thy grave in darkness. DRINK, and the fierce "BLACK MAN," have done their work. POOR ELLEN WILLIAMS !



TRIALS.

I HAD many times read the names of all those who silently lay in their last resting-places in Bamford church-yard ; but there was one grave-stone that greatly perplexed my young mind. On this stone was no name, no date, but merely the sentence, "A sinner saved by grace." Again and again I read this short epitaph with a mysterious interest, but did not then know its meaning. But now it has, to me, a sublimity, and a grandeur immeasurably surpassing all the pomp and splendour of any bronze or marble monument, which may mark the tomb of king, prince, warrior, or statesman.

Thirty years have rolled away since I first stood a Sunday-school scholar on that interesting spot ; and now I find myself again looking at the same short epitaph. *Other words have since been added*, but those thirty years have multiplied the number of silent sleepers. Our old superintendent, Robert Porter, our venerable, peace-loving deacon, Robert Ashworth, and our highly respected minister, Mr. Jackson, who, for eighteen years, ministered to us in holy things, are added to the number. Mr. Jackson was generous and charitable in his theology, lived a life of earnest consistent piety, and was very successful in his ministry. Near the same spot also rests his son Thomas, my old teacher, who was in many respects an extraordinary man.

Thomas was a lay-preacher, and remarkable for his love for, and close study of the Scriptures, and his ability in correctly quoting them. He travelled thousands of miles, chiefly on foot, to supply various pulpits. He built, for himself and family, a small stone cottage, near his beloved church and Sunday-school. And, while standing near his grave, I look with a feeling of sadness on that cottage, for there, on a bed of suffering and sickness, lies his eldest daughter.

On leaving the church-yard, crossing the road, and opening the small gate that leads to the cottage, I felt an unusual depression of spirits. I knew whose hand had planted the fruit-trees that bent their branches over the door, and saw the flower-bed that had, for years, in the season, brought forth the most splendid tulips ; and though these surpassers of Solomon in all his glory had, for a time, bowed their heads to the dust, yet the carnations and dahlias, now in full bloom, had equally shared the interest of him whose grave I had but just left. I walked for a short time in the small garden, hoping some one would see me, and invite me to enter ; but no one appearing, I ventured softly to knock at the door. A younger sister opened it and invited me in.

It has been my lot to visit many homes of the sick and dying, and the chamber where many a "good man meets his fate ;" but never did I enter a sick room with such mingled feelings as I did on this occasion. There, in the twenty-sixth year of her age, lay an intelligent young woman, who had for two years and four months been lying in exactly the same position, without power to move her body. And, during those two years and four months, in addition to her own affliction, she had been called to pass through the most terrible trials and distressing bereavements. Yet this pa-

tient, meek, suffering child of God, from her bed of sickness and home of sorrow, had been manifesting, to all around her, the power of religion in time of trouble.

On approaching the place near where she lay, she expressed her gladness that I had called, and requested I would take a seat near the bed, for she wished to talk with me about the work in which I was engaged amongst the poor, observing,—

“I have read your Reports, and ‘Strange Tales from Humble Life,’ and I have often wished I could join with you in such glorious work. There is nothing so truly desirable as to be able, in some way, to glorify God, and be useful to our fellow-creatures. To be the instrument, in God’s hands, of leading *one* poor sinner to Christ, is well worth working for, waiting for, and praying for, even though that was the only good resulting from one whole life of toil.”

“I am glad you have such views and feelings, Miss Jackson; but pardon me if I ask you if that place is the spot where, recently, three silent loved ones were laid?”

It may be thought that this was a cruel, unfeeling question; but I knew to whom I was speaking, and was anxious to turn the subject to her own experience.

After a moment’s pause, and the heaving of a deep sigh, she replied,—

“Yes, that is the place, and I see you did not like to ask the question. But there are times when, with kindred spirits, I have no objection to talk on the subject, for the memory of the just is blessed, and it is often a blessing to recall their memory,—to live again with them amidst the pleasures and joys of the past; and though these thoughts often end in sadness, it is the sadness that makes the soul wiser and better.”

"During your long sickness and heavy bereavements, have you never been tempted to murmur?" I asked.

"Nearly so. On one occasion, when my parents, sisters, and brothers were in tearful silence around my bed, expecting to witness my departure, I felt such a degree of joy and ecstasy as I was getting nearer and nearer home. The rapture of that moment I shall never forget. But when the doctor found there were a few throbbings of the pulse, and said I might still live, I did feel a great reluctance to come back to life again, not because I was afflicted, but because I was near heaven. Humanly speaking, I ought then to have died; why I was spared I cannot tell."

"Some people think we are immortal till our work is done. Perhaps your work is not done."

"*My* work," she answered, with a smile, "what work can I do?"

"You just now observed that there is nothing to be so greatly desired as, in some way, to glorify God, in doing good to others; but have not many of the Lord's tried ones glorified him most while in the furnace? When you look at those worthies whose lives stand out on the pages of history, at what period do their characters shine most brilliantly? When you think of Abraham, you don't remember his flocks of sheep, his man-servants and maid-servants, but you see him on Mount Moriah, in that sore trial of his faith, offering up his son Isaac. Nowhere does Abraham look so noble as in that trying moment. And when you look at Jacob, you always see him weeping over his bereavement, when his children were taken away. Joseph was in the pit, and in prison, before he went to court. We do not look at Job as the greatest man in all the East; but sitting on a dunghill, covered with sores, and bereft of everything,

except his faith in God. We do not look at Daniel decked in a scarlet robe, and a chain of gold, but in the den of lions ; nor at the three Hebrews in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, but walking through the fire. Your love for your Saviour is also the greatest when you see Him in the garden, sweating great drops of blood, or dying on the Cross."

"Yes, it is so. Before you came, I was thinking of that sublime composition in the *Messiah*, 'O Thou that tellest good tidings ;' but one part especially keeps uppermost in my mind, 'Lift up thy voice, be not afraid.' I think it was from hearing my father once sing and play the music to these words with great earnestness that makes me think of that part the most."

"Do you believe in accidents?" I asked.

"Yes, humanly speaking ; no, as regards Infinite wisdom," she replied.

"Do you think it an accident that I am here ? Aaron was the mouth-piece of Moses."

For a moment I felt sorry I had asked the question. She understood what I meant ; her cheeks flushed, tears stood in her eyes, and, for a considerable time, we were both silent. At last, with tremulous voice, she said,—

"O, that you had not mentioned this subject ; what am I, what am I ? Thousands have gone down to their graves in silence, who have suffered more than I have. My blessings far outweigh my sorrows, and why should I wish one word to be said on my account, as if there were something remarkable in my case."

"There is much that is remarkable in your own sufferings, and the events that have transpired in this cottage in

so short a time, and I feel it ought not to pass into oblivion. It may, and I think will, be a blessing to many."

She made no reply. On taking leave I said,—

"Did ever any person glorify God and dictate terms?"

"I do not wish to dictate terms, if I can see what are the Lord's terms. I hope always to be able to say, 'Thy will be done.' But there is nothing in my life worth giving to the world. I wish you had not mentioned it."

For several months I had complied with her evident desire. But a conviction that this short sketch of her life and sufferings may silence much unreasonable murmuring, cause many to be thankful for long-forgotten blessings, and lead some to the source of all true consolation, I now give it to the world, trusting that the modest, afflicted, patient young Christian will, by remembering the motive, forgive the deed.

Miss Jackson's early days showed the blessedness of a careful religious training. Piety at home had its influence on her young mind. She became a teacher in the Sabbath-school. When about twenty years of age she joined the church, but not until she felt that she was a child of God by adoption and grace. She knew her sins were forgiven, that she was born again of the Spirit, and had the Spirit's witness that she was a living stone in the living temple.

When she was smitten with the terrible spinal affliction that at once prostrated the whole body, that at once snatched her from her labours of faith and love, there was a general sympathy manifested by all who knew her. But to her father, mother, brothers, and sisters, it was a very heavy stroke, and produced much domestic anxiety. For several months her life seemed to hang on a thread, and many times her sorrowing relations were gathered around her bed to take

a last farewell. Again and again she returned from the very brink of the grave, to the astonishment of every one who witnessed how near she had been to death,—so near, that sometimes it was a question whether she was living or dead.

During these solemn and distressing scenes, her pious father, though himself a great sufferer in body, was like her guardian angel, reading from the book of God the sweet and strengthening promises to those who fall asleep in Jesus, and kneeling down by her side, pouring out his soul to Him who walks with His children through the dark valley. Many such scenes were witnessed in that cottage.

“There sighs were breathed,
Unutterable, which the Spirit of prayer
Inspired ; and wing'd for heaven, with speedier flight
Than loudest oratory.”

Before this time, Mr. Jackson had shown indications of failing health ; and his bodily sufferings were now such, that the doctor was in daily attendance. He was much confined to his bed, and for many weeks his sufferings were intensely severe. And now lay these two afflicted children of God in adjoining rooms, on beds of sickness, and it became a painful question, which of them would first quit this vale of tears.

But the thought of death did not in the least cast a gloom over the spirits of these two happy sufferers. Their lamps were trimmed, and they were joyfully waiting the coming of the Bridegroom. Many times, in intervals of the most intense agony, Mr. Jackson would call for his favourite violin, and, sitting up in bed, would draw from the mysterious strings the most harmonious sounds, and sing the psalms of Israel's sweetest bard. The daughter, inspired by her father's ecstasy, caught up the cheering strains, and these two happy souls, with heavenly themes inspired, mingled their anthems

with the songs of the redeemed in glory. Such was religion in this humble Bamford cottage.

On one occasion, when she was every moment expected to breathe her last, her father entreated that he might be carried to her room, to have the last look at his dear child. They wrapped him in blankets, and carefully placed him in an arm-chair, and again he gazed on the pale countenance of her he so much loved. He laid his trembling hand on her clammy fingers, and, with broken sobs, uttered for her a prayer and benediction. Tears rained down the cheeks of all who witnessed this scene, expected to be the last.

The daughter again returned to life, but the father was borne back to the bed of death. A few days after, and amidst the unbroken silence of the sick-room, she faintly heard her father breathe her name, and say, "Farewell."

And it was a farewell, for these were the last words he whispered to her; and the spirit winged its way to where pain and parting are never known.

On the day of her father's funeral, Rachel requested that his coffin might be brought to her bed-side. Her weeping relatives complied with this request, and carefully lifted her hand until it rested on the cold forehead of her dead parent. For a moment all were silent, gazing through their tears, on the affecting scene. For some time the afflicted child was speechless; when able to speak, she said:—

"My father, my dear father! The best of fathers is gone, gone before his child he so often saw on the brink of Jordan; but he has crossed before me, and now his happy soul is with the spirits of just men made perfect. For him the grave had no terrors; for him death had no sting. Farewell, my dear, dear father, but only for a few short moments."

After this affecting scene, the coffin of the father was

borne away by the sobbing friends of the living and the dead, and laid near the remains of his venerable parents, and of the "sinner saved by grace,"—soon to be followed by others from that house of mourning.

That grave, now open wide,
Will not grow green before another, yea,
And still another, of the sad weeping group
That stand around, shall early sleep with thee,
Whom now they lay in thy last resting place.

Some time after the death of Mr. Jackson, being on a visit to my mother's grave, and feeling a desire to speak a word of comfort to the widow, and, if possible, visit the sick room of her daughter, I called at the cottage ; but the mother informed me, in a whisper, that her daughter's life had been despaired of for several days, and they feared the least excitement would be fatal.

For some weeks I had daily expected to hear of her departure, but was amazed and distressed to hear of the illness of her brother. This brother,—a fine, intelligent, promising young man, highly esteemed, and much attached to his parents,—was strangely cut down, at the age of eighteen.

" On what a slender thread
Hang everlasting things ! "

Thomas sank rapidly, and soon he was pronounced dying. This new calamity was a terrible test for the faith of his sister ; and when she was informed of his death, and saw the anguish of her mother for his loss, she, in the agony of her soul, intreated the Lord that she might die with him.

" O ! " said she, " when my brother was dead, and I saw my bereaved mother sobbing and weeping for her child, I more than ever realized my helpless condition, and felt as if

my faith in God's goodness, and confidence in his providence, were almost gone. I was, to some extent, prepared for my father's death, knowing the terrible sufferings he had endured, and, from the gradual preparation my mind had undergone, the shock was not so great as when my brother was taken away. O, how dark everything seemed, and how hard for me to be reconciled to the stroke!"

The day for the brother's funeral came, and again the mourning relatives and friends assembled in sorrowful groups, and again the coffin was laid beside the bed of the sufferer, and again her hand was carefully lifted and laid on the forehead of her dead brother.

Weeping bitterly, and in the depth of her sorrow, she said,—

"Dear Thomas, would to God I had died for thee!"

The coffin was removed, and in a few moments Thomas lay beside his recently interred father, with a sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection.

While attempting to describe the fiery trials, and the sorrow upon sorrow through which Miss Jackson was called to pass, can we wonder if she should sometimes be unable to see clearly that all these things were working together for her good? Can we be surprised if she should question the justice of Providence, or feel her faith in God's goodness bending beneath her weight of woe? The finite never can comprehend the designs and doings of the Infinite; when passing through the floods, and while all the billows of the Almighty seem rolling over us, even the most submissive of God's children will cry out with all the anguish of Job or David.

But again a day of deeper gloom was rapidly hastening towards her. And now her faith, and the strength of Divine

grace, were to be put to the utmost test. With sorrow we enter on the description of what immediately followed on the death of her brother, and record the saddest of all the scenes in that house of mourning. After many months of anxious watching and nursing, during which I am assured she never got one full night's rest, so tender and unceasing were her sympathies and attentions, Mrs. Jackson's health completely broke down. She now lay in the same room with her daughter, and on one occasion seemed to be in a sound sleep, but it was the sleep of death ; a death sleep that continued for six weeks, and during the whole of that time no effort could awake her. Never once, through that period, not even for a moment, did she seem able to understand the earnest entreaties, and endearing words addressed to her by her heart-breaking children.

"Mother, dear mother, will you not, can you not speak to us?" often exclaimed her sick child. "Mother, will you not tell us how you suffer, and how you can trust in Him whom you have so long called your heavenly Father? Will you leave us without one word to comfort us, without one parting blessing, mother?"

But there was no answer, no reply from the mother's bed ; all was silent, except the fitful moan, or the slow, heavy breathing, followed by the last breath, and the last sigh, and the best of mothers was no more.

This stroke filled the whole neighbourhood with mourners ; the church and the school wore an air of sadness. Many wept that do not often weep, and from almost every one the question came,—“What will the daughter do?—how will she bear up under this overwhelming sorrow?” All feared that she would die heartbroken, and many predicted there would be two funerals on the same day.

Poor sufferer ! thy tender nurse and guardian in thy long helpless affliction no longer smooths thy pillow ; those eyes, that looked on thee so tenderly, are closed ; the tongue, that often cheered thy lonely hours, is silent ; the heart, that long has loved thee, beats with affection no more. No loss, but the loss of thy soul, could have been to thee so heavy. Thy mother is dead, and in that short sentence is a world of meaning.

The day goes by
On which our soul's beloved die. The day
On which the body of the dead is stretched
By hands that decked it when alive. The day
On which the dead is shrouded, and the day
Of burial comes.

And again the friends and relations, clothed in sable garments, wend their way to this cottage of tears. We enter with them, and again look upon the mother, as she calmly sleeps, and the bereaved daughter, as she sighs and weeps. Again the coffin is laid in the spot beside her bed, and again the hand is carefully lifted until it rests on the cold forehead of her dear parent. Few words were spoken ; in the anguish of her soul she feebly said,—“ My mother ! ” The coffin was borne away, and the mother was laid with the husband and son.

“ In death's soft slumber lulled to rest,
They sleep, by smiling visions blest,
That gently whisper peace ;
Till the last morn's fair opening ray,
Unfolds the bright, eternal day,
Of active life and bliss.”

There are sorrows so profound, and grief so deep, that make it imprudent for a stranger to intrude upon them. The weightiest words and wisest counsels do little towards bind-

ing up a breaking heart. Calm reflection, and quiet communing of the spirit bowed down to the dust, are often the best antidotes to grief, especially with those that recognize the hand of God in all events. Miss Jackson's was an intelligent piety. She was able to take a wide range of thought, and to draw largely on the imperishable promises of holy writ. She knew that, as link by link of the mysterious chain of Providence was unfolding, the last link would be found in the hands of him who does not afflict his children willingly, but has for everything a purpose. Knowing this, I did not venture to commune with her for some time, but, when I did, by letter, express to her a word of sympathy, she convinced me that my reasoning on her case had been right. Though her body invariably remains in the same condition, yet, at times, she is able to lift her hands and move her fingers. At these times she often pens her thoughts, and records her experience. In reply to my letter of condolence she wrote :—

“I was enabled to bear my dear father's removal with comparative calmness, he had been so great a sufferer, and for so long a time. The moment I knew his spirit had left its earthly tabernacle, I, in imagination, watched its entrance into the heavenly city, and heard the Saviour say,—‘ Well done ! ’ I hoped soon to join him. My bodily sufferings at this time were great and many, but the sweet consciousness that there was with me in the furnace ‘ One like unto the Son of God,’ cheered me so much that I could often say, ‘ Lord, it is good to be here.’ But a heavier cross was prepared for me,—waves and billows were to pass over me. How shall I tell you my feelings when I was informed of my dear brother's danger and his death? And scarcely was my brother no more, ere my beloved mother was overtaken

with the sleep from which she never awoke. Now my cup of sorrow was full,—my heart was overwhelmed within me. These, truly, were deep waters. How could I have borne this weight of heart-rending grief, which I now endured, had I not known Him who was my hiding-place? *Apart from Christ, this scene of desolation would have been uncheered by one drop of comfort, or one ray of hope!* But he did not leave me comfortless. “Lo, I am with thee,” was my stronghold. I kept repeating the promise, and many sweet hymns, especially the verses,—

“ Dear refuge of my weary soul,
On Thee while sorrows rise,
On Thee, when waves of trouble roll,
My fainting hope relies.
To Thee, I tell each rising grief,
For Thou alone canst heal ;
Thy word can send a sweet relief,
For every pain I feel.”

“ It was a source of deep grief to me, at this time, that I did not glorify God in the fire. I was not entirely submissive. When mother was taken away, I thought surely this last blow might have been withheld, or, at least, we might have been permitted to have one parting word to treasure, and receive her last blessing. I had near murmured, and it now gives me pain to think I ever for a moment doubted God’s goodness.”

Such a letter from one who, for two years and six months, had been unable to lift her head from the pillow of sickness, and who has, during her own heavy affliction, had the coffins of father, mother, and brother, laid at her bedside, that she might lay her feeble hand on their cold foreheads, ere the grave closed over them, reveals such a power in the religion

of Christ to comfort in the deepest, darkest, depths of sorrow, and gave such a thrill of joy to my soul while reading it, that I felt more than ever that religion is really the one thing needful. O, this religion of Jesus, what wonders does it accomplish ! It wipes guilt from the conscience, and darkness from the mind ; it brightens the gloomiest scenes, smooths the most rugged paths, cheers the most drooping spirit, gives faith to the fearful, courage to the timid, and strength to the weak. It transforms the dungeon or sick room into a palace, robs the grave of its terrors, and death of its sting ; and often, in this life, lifts the soul of the saint to the very gates of paradise. Money cannot buy it, good works cannot merit it, and no man deserves it ; yet God, through Christ, freely offers it to all. And now the afflicted, bereaved, sorely-trying subject of this narrative had, by faith in Christ, become possessed of it ; and it was this that lit up her pale, yet happy, countenance with raptures of holy joy, imparting a peace to which the unconverted must for ever be a stranger.

How many of the gay and thoughtless,—decked in diamonds, pearls, rings and chains, in silks and satins, dancing the giddy dance of life, swallowed up in the whirlpool of fashion, trying to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,—are a thousand times more to be pitied than she ? Yes ; and when their giddy dance draws to a close, they would give a thousand worlds to exchange places with this peaceful child of God when it will be for ever too late !

Dear sister, we now take our leave of thee. Still on thy bed of sickness,—still, through the dreary nights of winter, or the brighter days of summer, now in the fourth year of thy prostration, a prisoner in thy humble chamber ; yet we leave thee, believing that, after all, thou hast an average cup

of joy. But while we leave, thee, we join with thee in thanking thy God, who so graciously retains thee, and feel persuaded that millions of the young, the healthy and thoughtless, strangers to religion, *even in this life*, know far less of real, lasting happiness, than the meek, patient, though sorely-afflicted Christian, as she lies within the humble cottage at Bamford. And she is another, amongst the millions of witnesses, that the grace of God, under all circumstances, can comfort and sustain His children under the heaviest bereavements, and severest TRIALS.



ANSWERED AT LAST.

I HAVE often thought that John's heavenly vision of golden vials filled with incense, the prayers of the saints, would contain many hundred thousand of prayers of parents for their children, especially of godly parents for ungodly children ; for, amongst the millions of earnest petitions that daily ascend to the Throne, many of them come from hearts made sad by those they love the dearest grieving them the most. And how many of such parents have prayed and waited, and have at last gone down to the grave without seeing their heart-breaking request answered,—have died before their dearest hope was realized ?

How is it that some truly consistent and earnest religious parents have wicked children ? We know it is so, but we also know it is the exception, and not the rule. A large majority of ministers, officers, and members of our Christian churches are children of pious parents; the rule is, that pious parents have pious children, and where we find the exception we are surprised and pained, and wonder how it is. The sons of the worthy old patriarch, Jacob, almost broke his heart. David was a good man, and one whose recorded experience has been a blessing to millions, yet he had great trouble with his children. Good old Eli loved and served his God, yet he had two bad sons. And many good parents since their day have had to mourn, and weep, and pray over

their undutiful offspring, through many long years, and themselves go to heaven before their prayers have been answered. But their requests are treasured up in golden vessels before the throne, and who knows how many of them will be heard? Many of them have already been answered, and, for the comfort of sorrowing fathers and mothers, the following incidents are recorded.

Fifteen years since a person kept a small shop in Rochdale. She had an only brother, named John, residing north of the town, who sometimes came over to see his sister. He was remarkably good-looking, tall, strong, apparently healthy, and about forty years of age. Being well acquainted with the sister, she requested me to spend a day with her brother, and take him out to see the country round Rochdale, especially mentioning Hollingworth. The day was fine, and while walking leisurely towards Hollingworth Lake, we began talking a little about our own histories. I learned that John was a farmer, and an active member of a Christian church, and that he took more delight in conversing about religion than about either his crops or his cattle. He was a good speaker, seemed truly happy while telling of his conversion to God, and his Christian experience was rich and solid.

"You have much to be thankful for ; a good farm, good health, and a good hope of heaven," I observed.

"Yes ; I have much for which I ought to be grateful, but I have one standing trouble that will go with me to the grave ; for, though I know I am a pardoned sinner, memory is there, and the remembrance of some of my sins leave a sting that will never be extracted. Money cannot do it, time will not do it, and all the people in the world cannot,

if they would. I refer to my conduct to my father and mother."

For several minutes we walked on in silence, for John seemed deeply affected, and I did not know what to say. At last I asked,—

"Are they both dead?"

"Yes, many years since; and I believe that my wickedness shortened their days."

"Were they religious?"

"Yes. I now think that two better creatures never lived; but from the time I became a young man, they had nothing from me but sorrow upon sorrow. They died when I was at the worst. I believe they offered up thousands of prayers for my salvation. Many of them I heard, for we had daily prayer; but, long before they died, I refused to join them,—I either contrived to be absent or walked out of the house,—but now I set a value on the old prayers beyond language to express. They piled them up in heaven for me."

"In what did your bad conduct principally consist?"

"Refusing to attend church, abusive language, neglecting work, bad company, late hours, and worse. But I did not think of the pain I was inflicting at the time, in fact, I did not care. A kind old creature, who lived with my parents for many years, and who now resides in a cottage near my farm, has told me, at times, of what she saw, and she always weeps while telling. She has several times given me the history of one night, part of which I knew.

"On going out on the day she refers to, my father told me, with a troubled look, that my conduct was getting past bearing, and that if I was not at home by eleven o'clock, he would bolt the door. Mother heard what he said, and

looked very uneasy, for she knew he would perform his threat. My poor mother had often waited up for me much later, though eleven is a late hour for farmers. The old servant, when first telling me, said,—

“ ‘I saw your mother go up stairs several times that day, and I knew what for. She knew where to take her troubles, and you, Johnny, found her plenty of them. When night came, and it began to be late, she became very uneasy, and many times opened the door and looked out into the dark, hearkening for your step with breathless anxiety. Your father sat reading his Bible by the fireside, but, poor man, he did not read much ; he looked more into the fire than into the book, for he was greatly troubled. He looked often at the clock, and I thought he was afraid of the time coming. I, too, was very anxious, for I knew what was going on, and would have given my new cap to have heard your feet coming.

“ ‘The clock struck at last. Your father quietly rose, and bolted the door. Your mother bent down her head to hide her silent tears. I believe the shooting of that bolt went to her heart. O, Johnny, it is a sad thing to bolt a door on a child,—to lock one out that ought to be in. Not a word was spoken. We all retired to bed, but not to sleep. I think your mother was long on her knees that night ; and I have heard her say since, that neither she nor your father slept one wink. It was a sorrowful night for us all.’

“I remember going home the night the servant mentioned, and, finding all fast, got the barn ladder and crept through the hay-loft door upon the hay-stack, thinking how cleverly I had found myself a bed. My father said little to me for several days, but my mother entreated me, for her sake, to give up my bad company, saying that I should bring

down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave ; and I believe she was right in her prediction. They both lie buried in the village churchyard, not far from my dwelling, near a little gate, on the west side. I have many times leaned over that gate, and looked on their grave, with my heart almost breaking. Every bar of that gate has been wet with my tears, and one dark night I knelt on the cold stone that covers them, praying they would forgive me."

"And how did you become a changed man?"

"I well remember that, when I was at the worst, I had continued convictions and strivings of the Spirit. There was nothing troubled me so much as the prayers of my parents. Wherever I was at the time of prayer, I was miserable, and I many times wished they would not pray for me, but it is a mercy they did. For several Sundays after my father's death (he died the last), I, for decency's sake, attended the church, and on one Sabbath morning I had such a view of my misconduct that I wondered the earth did not open and swallow me up. For many weeks after I was in the most wretched state of mind. I wanted to pray, but durst not ; and when I read the Bible—my father's Bible—which I some times did in private, I felt worse and worse, until I was forced to go on my knees and cry for mercy. I found mercy, and believe the prayers of my parents have at last been heard. O, I wish they had lived to see the change, I believe they would have lived longer. It is a dreadful thing for children to disobey parents, especially good parents ; it is sure to bring sorrow, sooner or later. But, thank God, their prayers are heard. They will be surprised to see me in heaven, but I do believe I shall see them there, and it will be a meeting!"

Yes, John, thought I, you are right, it will be a meet-

ing ; and I believe there will be myriads of such meetings in heaven. The prayers of God's saints, whatever they are for, are treasured up in golden vials to show how precious they are.

John's description of his wicked conduct to his parents, and the sorrow he had caused them, reminded me of an early acquaintance, who brought much sorrow to his home. How many families, who but for one would be happy families, have a continual cloud hanging over their home in consequence of that one ! There needs but one wicked, disobedient child to destroy the peace of the whole house. To fear going among our friends, to keep away from the social circle, lest we may be asked something respecting an erring sister or brother, or an undutiful child, is very depressing to the spirits. To seek secesy and retirement, and even keep from the house of God, because the *one* has brought some new disgrace, has been done thousands of times. Many a good man, who fondly hoped to see his son or sons become his stay and staff, and inherit his name and credit, has been bowed down to the earth to find them his disgrace. When a good man so circumstanced sees another good man surrounded with kind, affectionate, dutiful sons or daughters, how his soul yearns with anguish over the contrast ! *He* only can give a true estimate between a good child and a bad one.

Thomas, the young man now before us, caused his father the greatest trouble ; and that good, kind old man had to go down to the grave, and never see the child for whom he had offered thousands of prayers become a changed character. He made the latter part of his father's days, days of continual sorrow ; so much so, that he once said to a friend with whom he was conversing about his son, that he was

afraid that he should lose his natural affection for him, and become absolutely indifferent to his welfare, either here or hereafter ;—but he finished this painful sentence with a flood of tears, showing that his love for him was still very powerful.

Many times when Thomas was out late, his mother would pretend to be busy sewing, that she might have an excuse for remaining up, so that the door might not be bolted against her wicked son ; and frequently after her husband had retired to bed—not to rest—did the poor afflicted creature kneel down and pour out her soul to God on behalf of her erring child ; and Thomas, more than once, when peeping through the keyhole, saw his mother on her knees, and knew for whom she was praying ; and though he was always more or less drunk, yet he could afterwards tell how painfully the sight affected him.

The mornings following these late hours, bad company, and drink, were sorrowful mornings. Few words were said by any of the family at breakfast. The little that was eaten, was eaten in sadness ; but the cause of all this would seldom be there, for he was like almost all such, too big a coward to face the consequences of his own wicked doings, and so contrived to get out of the house or remain in bed. He was in bed one Sunday morning when all the rest of the family were gone to their place of worship. The subject, that morning, was David's sorrow for his son Absalom. The preacher wept much while speaking of the broken hearts of godly parents, broken by the conduct of ungodly children. Poor man, he spoke from experience, and he was speaking to some who could weep with him.

That was the last time the father of Thomas attended a place of worship. He gradually sank in health, lingering for many months. Step by step he went to the grave, with-

out any particular disease. The last day of his life he wished to have a private interview with his son ; he felt anxious to give him his blessing, and a last warning, while he was able to speak. Thomas was led into the room of his dying father by his weeping mother, with tears rolling down her cheeks. He sat down beside the bed ; the father stretched out his thin, clammy hand, and Thomas took hold of it, waiting his father's words, but none were spoken. Speech had fled ; he never spoke again !

Every day that Thomas went to his work he had to pass within a few yards of his father's grave. I have seen him several times in the dark looking through the rails on the spot where his parent lay buried, and once ventured to ask him how he felt, as he was looking on the last resting-place of his good, Christian father ?

"O, he was a decent old chap," he replied, and went whistling away.

Shortly after the night I last saw him he left the country, and little was heard of him for some time. One morning a letter came addressed to his mother. It was the handwriting of her son—the undutiful son of a thousand prayers. On the last page of the letter were the following words :—

"Mother, do you ever feel your heart hard when you pray ? I have been on my knees many times, asking God to forgive me for my conduct to you and my poor dead father, but O, how hard my heart feels ! I want to pray, but somehow cannot ; yet I cannot give it up. Most of this letter has been written on my knees. The Lord have mercy upon me, and soften my heart, and bend my stiff neck. O Lord, keep me and save me !"

When his mother received this letter, she, like Hezekiah, went in private and spread it before the Lord. O, how she

prayed again and again that her ungodly, wandering child might now become a new creature in Christ Jesus. She rejoiced over the letter, but she rejoiced with trembling. Hope was now brightening, but doubt still lingered, and she was afraid to say a word about it even to her most intimate friends. But letter after letter followed, all in the same strain, and then one came that money could not buy, telling the dear, dear mother, that Thomas was now a pardoned child of God. The piled-up prayers of the father in heaven, and the mother on earth, were answered at last !

Five years have now rolled away since Thomas wrote this letter to his mother, but still he remains a sincere and active Christian. He holds high office in the church, and is much beloved and respected, and is an unspeakable comfort to his widowed mother ; but Thomas has often been heard to say that he never thinks of his father without a bitter pang of sorrow.

“ But are we always to wait till death before our prayers are answered ? ” some may ask. No, not always, though many have done so.

Good old Mr. Grimshaw, one of the most popular and useful preachers in his day, had a most wicked son. He prayed for him long, but he died without an answer. This son, on one occasion, entering the church where his father has often preached, was greatly overcome with sorrow and grief because of his sins, and, while at a prayer-meeting held after the service, in bitterness of soul he besought the Lord, for Christ's sake, to have mercy upon him, and pardon his transgressions. His prayer was heard, and in the fulness of his joy he leaped to his feet, and, lifting up both hands towards heaven, called out with a loud voice,—“ O ! what will my father say ? What will my father say ? ” Yes,

and what will many a father and mother yet say, when they shall see their returned prodigals in glory !

But we do not always wait so long. There are thousands whose hopes have been so long deferred that hope was almost gone, who have yet lived to see their hopes realized. Praying breath is not spent in vain, and we give the following as an illustration :—

Near the town of Bury, a place about five miles from Rochdale, there formerly resided a good old Christian of the name of Crompton. This man had been long a labourer in the Lord's vineyard, and had been the instrument of much good to others. How inscrutable is this truth to many, and yet it is a truth ! Ministers, Sunday-school teachers, and others, who are anxiously working and praying for the conversion of souls, can see others saved, and those for whom they are most concerned hardening their hearts against all efforts made on their behalf. They see many of the most unlikely brought to Christ, and those they have most reason for believing should be converted, become the most hopeless and hardened. Nothing but faith in God, and a consciousness of duty, could keep such men to their work,—reasoning never could. This is one of God's lessons to teach us that the souls of other children—the souls of strangers—are as precious as the souls of those we feel we could die for. And if we have to preach and pray with sadder hearts, it makes us more in earnest : what to us is a great grief, may prove to others an unspeakable blessing. Our very sorrows, may, in this respect, be turned to the glory of God.

Crompton was in this mysterious position. He had one son, named Samuel, who was to him a source of continual anxiety. He had trained him in example and precept with much care, and while he was young—while he could “give

him a kiss and put him to bed,"—he was full of bright thoughts for the future ; but as he rose up to manhood, and his disposition began to unfold itself, he turned out to be a very ungrateful and rebellious son. He left his home, wandered for several years from place to place, and grew every day more wicked. All news from Samuel was bad news,—all reports respecting his conduct only deepened the wound in his father's heart. He wished him at home, yet feared his coming. He seldom mentioned his name, yet there was no name so often thought of, and especially when the old man was at prayer ; then he was never forgotten.

O, what millions of prayers have followed the steps of wandering prodigals ! I have often thought that one reason why so many emigrant ships safely ride the storms of the trackless deep is because so many prayers follow them. Crompton's prayers had followed Samuel, and, after many years, when in shattered health, in the words of the prodigal he said, "I will arise, and go to my father," his father received the returning son with mixed feelings of pain and pleasure, pain to see him so very miserable and wretched in appearance, and pleasure to see that he was yet out of hell.

The change in Samuel's external appearance was not greater than the internal. His haughty soul was bowed to the dust, and he was come home to implore forgiveness, and to tell of the wonderful power of saving grace to the chief of sinners. O, what joyful news to the poor old father ! his long-sorrowful countenance beamed with cheerfulness. He had many times prayed,—“Lord, whatever may become of Samuel's body, do save his soul ;” and now he saw him again, weak in body, but happy in the consciousness of sins forgiven. Disobedience to parents had shortened his life, as it has done to thousands. The sin of the soul

was pardoned, but the consequence to the body was a long, wasting sickness.

During the latter part of Samuel's sickness his father watched over him with the greatest tenderness. They could now kneel together at the mercy-seat, and talk of the wonderful way in which the Lord brought him to see himself a sinner, and how much better it was for him to go down to an early grave and go to heaven, than live on in rebellion, and die an old man unsaved. It was painful to the aged man to see his son wasting away before his eyes, but it was far less painful than to see him living a life of wickedness : his soul was saved, and that was to the father the principal thing.

Mrs. Horrocks (now residing in Heywood), who was present at the moment of parting, describes it as a sight long to be remembered. Speaking of Samuel's death, she said :—

“The last day came—the day of parting—the day of death. Samuel's summons to the eternal world arrived, but the messenger brought no terrors. With his last breath he praised his God and blessed his father ; and when, with that last breath, the spirit glided away to the realms of the blest, the old man fell on his knees, and, stretching out his hands over his dead child, his long white locks hanging over his shoulders, and tears streaming down his cheeks,—thanked God, in choking sobs, that his Samuel was now in glory. ‘Yes, Lord,’ said the old man, ‘I have long prayed, and prayed, and hoped against hope, but now Thou, in Thine own way, hast heard me. My child is safe,—and Samuel is in heaven,—and all my prayers for his salvation are ANSWERED AT LAST !’

PRISCILLA.

I KNEW a young man who was struggling hard with a small business and a young family, trying to help his aged father and mother,—dependent upon their children,—and who regarded it as one of his many blessings that he was able to do a little towards making his aged parents comfortable in their declining years. He resided about three miles from the cottage in which they lived, and, for many years, went to see them every fortnight. On one of his visits he found them seated, one on each side of the fire, looking very dejected. On inquiring the reason his father said,—

“ Well, my lad, thy mother and me have been thinking we are lying hard upon thee and others who are keeping us, for you have little to spare. We paid poor rates forty years, and we have been thinking that we have some right to parish relief. If they refuse to give us anything here, we have made up our minds to go into the workhouse. We do not like it, but we think it will be the best for all sides, for you have all enough to do without keeping us,—and especially thee.”

The moment his father finished his answer, the two old people burst into tears. The son silently rose from the chair, and walked towards the window, and was for some time unable to speak : then, turning towards his parents, he said,—

"Father, mother, look at me; do you see these boots, this coat, waistcoat, and trousers, made of good Yorkshire black cloth? I will willingly exchange this cloth for fustian, and these boots for clogs, before you shall have either parish pay, or go to the workhouse. Do you want to rob me of God's blessing?—for I never could expect Him to bless me if I did not do my duty to my parents. How could I lift up my head in the streets, or in the church, if I knew that my father and mother were paupers and I could prevent it? No, no; let me have the unspeakable pleasure of doing all I can to make you comfortable to the last moment of your lives, and then I can expect God's blessing.

"Besides, I am greatly in your debt. You maintained me until I was able to work. I could not earn much for you before I was ten years of age. I should cost you at least the sum of seven shillings per week, which, without interest, would amount to one hundred and forty-six pounds. Let me pay that back, and then we will talk about the workhouse. No, no; no workhouse for my father and mother while I can help it."

This young man was right in his determination to keep his parents out of the workhouse. Yet, to many, the workhouse is a merciful shelter, and a better home than they are able to secure for themselves in sickness or old age, and thousands have been thankful for such a retreat from much worse ills. Of this truth Priscilla, the subject of this narrative, is an illustration.

Some years since, a cottage in Addison's Yard, Preston, contained a very poor family. The oldest female, an intelligent looking young woman of sixteen, was unaccountably smitten with paralysis, and night and day lay helpless on her bed. Her affectionate, anxious, palefaced mother nursed

her with great tenderness, doing all she could for her afflicted child and her three younger brothers. But it was little she could do, for the husband and father, who ought to have shared with his wife in caring for his home and children, and especially for his sick daughter, spent much of his time in the public-house, talking about the people's rights, and how a nation ought to be governed, helping to clothe the publican's wife with silks and satins, and send his children to the boarding-school, while his own wife and children were clothed in rags. Drink did for this man what it has done for thousands, it destroyed all his natural affection ; he left his home and his country, caring only for himself, and left his family to the care of strangers. A neighbor, seeing their misery and distress, obtained an order for them to go into the Preston workhouse. On the day of their removal, the same kind neighbor took his own cart, in which he placed some bedding, and, with great care, several friends helped to lay Priscilla as comfortable as possible. The mother sat in the cart to take care of her, the other children walking, all quietly wended their way to the workhouse, weeping as they went.

For two years the mother did what she could, helping in the house, watching over her children day and night, looking more especially to her still helpless daughter. Often, in the silent hours, did these sorrowing ones talk of him that had deserted them, daily hoping that he might perhaps become a better man, come back, and take them again to a home of their own. So deeply did her mother feel her daily cares and troubles, that her health bent beneath the weight. She died, and with her last breath prayed for her lost husband and helpless child.

It is not easy to estimate the loss of the doubly bereaved

child when her mother was taken away. The death of a good mother has been the grave of many joys ; but when that mother was the only nurse, the loss must be great indeed.

Priscilla had with her in the workhouse a little brother, called John. This little brother begged that he might be allowed to nurse his sister ; and, with the help of an old woman in the room, he did what he could to supply his mother's place. But, in a short time, John was taken away to learn a trade. It was a sorrowful parting ; but the, sister, knowing that it was for his good, willingly allowed him to go.

Priscilla had been lying helpless on her bed in the workhouse about three years when her brother John was taken away. So completely was she prostrated, that she could not sit up or change her posture. She could use her hands, and the stroke had not affected her head, but in other respects she was quite helpless. She had learned to read in the Sunday-school, a place she loved and attended regularly as long as she was able ; and now she found her little knowledge of reading of great value. She improved herself in knitting and sewing, for she always said,—“ I will do what I can for the poor children in this place who cannot do anything for themselves.”

She greatly regretted not being able to write, for she wished to occupy her mind as much as possible, to keep away depressing thoughts. A good Christian, who often visited the workhouse, hearing of her wish, kindly undertook to teach her, and for several months attended to his charge, until she was able to write a letter to her brother.

But often, after all that was done to mitigate the lonely sorrow of Priscilla, she was very sad ; for none but those

who have experienced it can tell the dreary, depressing effects of a long, protracted affliction,—to be, month after month, and year after year, in the same condition, cut off from life's social enjoyments, and shut out from the world's busy scenes. The spring comes, and tints the world with ten thousand shades of beauty, but not for them; to them flowers bloom and die unseen, except some loving hand gathers and brings them to the sufferer. The lark, the thrush, and the linnet fill the fields and the forests with their song, but they sing not for them. The shady walk, the mountain scenes, that inspire the poet and enrapture the philosopher, bring no inspiration or rapture for them. The church bell tolls its Sabbath peal to welcome worshippers; but for the invalids they peal in vain, except to remind them of their loss. To have wearisome days and nights; to lie awake while all around are sleeping; to spend the long, lonely night in anxious thought, or troubled dreams,—no sound but the watchman's tread, or the striking hour, requires something more than human help to fortify the soul against despair. Priscilla had not got that something, and, as a consequence, was often in the deepest despondency. She wished to die, yet was afraid to die. She was often found in tears, but had no hand to wipe them away. Is it a wonder that she should say,—“I have now been lying on this bed of affliction for seven years, and yet the doctor gives me no hope! O, how gloomy are all my prospects! I have not one bright spot in this dark wilderness.” Little did poor Priscilla know, when she uttered this mournful sentence, that she had yet to lie on that bed thirty years longer. How merciful is the Almighty in keeping down the curtain of futurity, only revealing to us our coming troubles as He knows we shall be able to meet them; telling us that

"sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," thereby teaching us not to anticipate sorrow.

But behind the dark cloud that had so long hung over Priscilla's hopes a light was appearing, and by the finger of a stranger was she pointed to this light. Many Christian friends, whose hearts beat with sympathy for the poor, the sick, and the sorrowful, went to the workhouse at various times. Amongst them was one who, when she came to the bedside of Priscilla, and heard from the trembling lips a sketch of her history, was touched to the deepest depths of her soul, with a desire to be instrumental in pointing the desponding one to Him who can bind up the breaking heart. In affectionate language she said to Priscilla,—

"They tell me you have been laid helpless on your bed of sickness seven years, my dear sister."

"Yes, a little over seven years."

"Does the doctor give you any hope that you will ever be better."

"Not much. I think he has no hope himself."

"No doubt, my dear sister, you would like to get well, and be like other young people, walking about in the world?"

"Yes; I often think my lot a very hard one, and wonder what I have done that I should suffer as I do. I many times wish I had never been born, or died when I did not know what death was."

"Then you are afraid to die, Priscilla?"

"Yes."

"But the Bible tells us that they that die in the Lord are blessed. Have you never read that cheering statement?"

"Yes; but I do not understand it. I have many times read in Revelation of the glories of heaven, and the happi-

ness of those who had gone ; but I think I shall never get there myself."

" But, my dear sister, the way to heaven is as open to you as it was to them. He that opened the way not only showed them, but led them every step of the way ; and though there be a multitude that no man can number from every nation, people, and tongue, every one of them set out from Calvary, and Calvary is, and ever will be, the only place from which a poor sinner must start on his journey to heaven ; it is from the Cross to the Crown."

Priscilla turned her head to hide her tears. The last sentence evidently made an impression ; light was breaking into the dark mind of the poor invalid, and that light was the light of life. The kind friend wiped the tears from her own eyes, and from the eyes of the poor sufferer. Then taking hold of her hand, she kneeled down by her bedside, and, long and earnestly, prayed that God, for Christ's sake, would speak peace to the heart of the sorrowing one. That prayer was heard, but not that day did the answer come. Again and again did the earnest Christian,—the angel of mercy,—visit the house of the poor, and read to Priscilla the blessed promises out of the holy book. Again and again did she, with increasing power, point the now penitent sinner to Him who came into the world to save sinners.

Again they parted ; but soon after the following letter, written by Priscilla, was put into the hands of the kind, Christian lady, who read it with raptures of joys :—

" DEARLY BELOVED CHRISTIAN FRIEND,

" O, my dear friend, what a Saviour I have found ! In Him I have now more than I could ask ; in his fullness I have found all that my poverty could need ; and you, my dear friend, have been the humble instrument in the hands

of the Lord my God, of bringing me to the knowledge of the truth. I pray God you may never grow weary in well doing, but still go on visiting the sick, comforting those who are cast down, and instructing the ignorant. You delight to do good in secret, but He that seeth in secret shall reward you openly. O, my dear friend, be fervent in prayer for the conversion of sinners.

“My dear friend, please to forgive my freedom and manner of writing to you, for it is all love which I owe to you for the kindness you have shown to me.

“I remain your truly affectionate,

“Humble friend,

“PRISCILLA P. PROFFITT.”

Now the spring may come, and, with its warm, soft breath, call forth the millions of flowers from their winter slumber; the linnet, the lark, and the thrush may fill the air with their melodious song; the young, the healthy, and the strong may walk the shady grove, or climb the mountain's side, catching pleasure from the scenes and sounds; but there is not one of them more happy than the new-born babe in Christ, though lying a sick pauper in the parish workhouse. True happiness comes not from without but from within; peace with God through Christ is the only source of real joy. Millions have proved this true, but never one to the contrary. Did Priscilla now wonder what she had done that she should suffer so much? No. Did she wish she had never been born, or died when a baby? No. Did she now fear to die? No. Did she despair of ever getting to heaven? No. Old things were passed away, and all things were become new? The gloom that hung over her mind was now dispersed.

“The cloud of deep darkness by mercy was riven,
And she saw through the opening the bright face of heaven.”

God's greatest gift to man is pardon and peace, and the witness of the Spirit that we are His adopted children. Priscilla had now got this greatest of all gifts. What a blessing to any, but especially to one who had yet to lie helpless in the workhouse for thirty years !

Priscilla's conversion opened out to her an entirely new sphere of action. She had now an object in life ; she now became anxious, as all real converts do, for the good of others. By her example, she taught them meekness, patience, resignation, and kindness ; and by her precept, became an instrument and guide to many of the poor, ignorant creatures around her. From the day of her conversion she prayed that she might never be ashamed to testify to the power of saving grace, but speak of the love of Christ to poor sinners on every fitting opportunity. To many hundreds in the workhouse, and to friends and visitors who came to see her, she became a preacher of the gospel. Her peace was deep, and her joy great. The promises of the Bible were to her more precious than gems, or pearls, or countless gold ; they filled her soul with holy raptures. She ofteg sang,—

“In the dark watches of the night, I count his mercies o'er,
I praise him for the blessings past, and humbly ask for more.”

Hearing of several persons in various parts of the country being similarly afflicted, she opened up with them a correspondence. Seventeen of these letters I have had the privilege of reading, and all show how earnest she was in trying to point the poor sufferers to the source of all comfort. To Elizabeth Hill, Great Moore-street, Bolton, still alive and confined to her bed, she writes,—

“PRESTON, March 21st, 1833.

“MY DEAR SISTER,

“We are still in the school of affliction, and how long our dear Lord intends to keep us there I do not know ; but this I hope we know, we are in the hands of God. O entreat Him to fit us for the whole of His will and pleasure. I also trust it is our heart's desire to devote ourselves anew to the Lord, beseeching Him that all our affections may be more than ever consecrated to His glory. When we consider how great our privileges are of calling God our Father, it ought to make us very humble. Compared with such a relationship, the world and all its pleasures seem less than nothing, and God appears all and in all. O how precious is His word ! Were I able to tell you what I feel when reading in my blessed Bible,—but alas ! it is impossible. It may well be called a precious book. I often wonder what would become of us without the word of God ; we should, indeed, be comfortless creatures.

“From you companion in the furnace,

“PRISCILLA P. PROFITT.”

One of her letters expresses her great distress of mind at the loss of the use of her left arm, because it deprived her of power to work a little. She was never again able to use it, and her usefulness, as far as regarded knitting and sewing, was ended. Some time after, she was smitten with a partial blindness. This was a sore trial, for she became dependent on others to read to her out of her blessed Bible ; but none of these misfortunes caused her to utter one murmur. The medical gentleman, who attended her almost daily for twenty-six years, states that, though her sufferings were often very severe, he never heard one complaint escape her lips, but, on

the contrary, she was full of expressions of thankfulness for what she called her mercies. And the Governor of the workhouse often declared that Priscilla was a blessing to the whole establishment. The ignorant gathered round her bed to hear words of wisdom. Conscience-stricken sinners asked her what they must do to be saved ; the sorrowing sought her sympathy and advice ; and the friendless could always reckon on Priscilla as one whose heart was filled with love to all. Disputes were brought to her for settlement, and seldom were her peaceable counsels rejected..

But the most interesting sight, and one which was hundreds of times witnessed, was the poor little orphan children of the workhouse brought to her bedside to learn their prayers. Poor things, she frequently wept for them, when she came to the part,—“ Bless my father and my mother.” They had no father or mother to bless ; and the loss of her own parents caused Priscilla to mingle her tears with the tears of the poor lonely creatures. Many of them to this day, remember her kind words to them when kneeling by her side. One, who now holds a respectable position in society, says,—“ I learned my prayers at Priscilla’s bedside, and from her lips first heard of the love of a Saviour for poor children ; and I believe my conversion to God in after life to be the result of impressions received from her at that time.

Night after night, for many years, the kind school-mistress of the Union repaired to the now almost blind Priscilla’s room, to read for her a portion of the holy book. Many of her observations on what was read were truly sublime. Christ’s love for sinners in dying to redeem them, and going to prepare for them mansions in glory, filled her soul with wonder and love. When I stood beside her bed, and heard

her expressions of gratitude for God's wonderful mercies, my, conscience smote me for my want of faith and confidence. Her Christian experience seemed immeasurably richer than mine, and my prayer on leaving was, that I might gather strength and confidence from what I had seen and heard.

"Yes, twenty-three years have I been confined to this bed of sickness, and if it be God's will that I must remain twenty-three years more I am quite content, and only desire to wait His time and suffer His will." This was said by Priscilla to Miss C. Johnson, who, for nineteen years after, went, almost weekly, to see and talk with her sick friend, "to learn, but not to teach." To this lady, and to Mrs. Fishwick (another of her long-tried friends), she was greatly attached; they were to her friends indeed, and both speak of her with the tenderest affection.

Christmas-day was to Priscilla the day of days. On this day she annually renewed her covenant with her God, solemnly consecrating herself to serve Him, by living a holier life, and in every possible way trying to seek His glory. The songs in the street,—“Christians, awake!” were to her the most delightful sounds. To all the inmates of the Preston workhouse this day was a joyful day, for the guardians provided for them an extra feast. The rejoicing was generally very great, and Priscilla cheerfully entered into their feelings, for she loved to see them merry and happy,—she could rejoice with them that rejoiced.

The Christmas-morn of 1863 arrived, and to the inmates then present it will be long remembered. Many of them were seen standing in groups, and with anxious looks, talking about Priscilla. The orphan children whispered to each other that Priscilla was very poorly. The halt, the maimed, and the blind, heard that her case was hopeless, with sad

hearts. Throughout the entire house sorrow was written on every countenance, as the report spread from room to room that she was dying. The clock struck three, and, with one last expression borne on her lingering breath,—“What am I?”—the soul of the long-afflicted child of poverty and suffering winged its flight from a pauper’s bed in a parish workhouse to the bright and glorious plains of Paradise.

Farewell, thou child of many sorrows and many joys, thou hast taught the world a lesson. Murmuring souls, who fret and pine over little ills, remembering all their crosses, and forgetting all their blessings ; counting their cloudy hours, but never reckoning their days of sunshine, may learn from thee, who was forty-two years confined to thy bed, thirty of those years with a helpless arm, and fourteen years almost blind. Yet, from the day of thy conversion to God,—stretching almost over the entire length of those many long years,—not one murmur was heard to pass thy lips by the many thousands who witnessed thy patient suffering. Amongst the many evidences that those Christians who are longest in the fire shine the brightest, may now be counted the forty-two years bed-ridden PRISCILLA.



JULIA ; OR, THE FIRST WRONG STEP.

FREQUENTLY I find myself taking stock of our congregation at the CHAPEL FOR THE DESTITUTE, during the singing of the opening hymn, and think that few gatherings present such a variety of character. We have very old men and women, who have grown grey in the service of Satan ; many less advanced in years, but old in crime ; middle-aged, who are only just beginning to think about serious things ; others still younger, but who look much older than they are, in consequence of the self-imposed hardships through which they have had to pass. We have a goodly number of the staid and orderly, but very poor ; some who have seen better days, and who seem thankful for such a shelter ; some who come for a few services only, and some only once, whose brown faces and seedy garments indicate their restless characters. These brown faces are to me not the least interesting, for with most of them there is a history of disobedience to parents, of homes forsaken, of morals ruined, and prospects blasted. Some of them I have seen writhe in agony during the singing of the sweet songs of the sanctuary, or the readings from the Holy Book,—being thereby forcibly reminded of their happier days. The wanderings of one of these last characters constitutes the substance of this narrative.

At one of our services during the past year, amongst the brown faces there was one evidently young ; judging from

her appearance she might be about twenty years of age. Everything about her indicated that she was a wanderer, and, during the singing of the first hymn, she sat down on the form and buried her weeping face in a part of her torn dress. I have witnessed many such sights as this, and I often feel that I could weep with them. I have only to suppose myself in their condition, or imagine them to be my own sisters or brothers, or children, and by thus bringing it home can enter into their feelings.

As I expected, the weeper sought me out after the service. I provided for her a little food and a night's lodging, and I next saw her seated on a step in Drake-street, waiting my coming to my office. Poor thing, her feet were so swollen and sore she could scarcely move, and it was with difficulty that she could walk into my room. She evidently thought I might be her friend, and voluntarily gave me much of her history. On asking her how old she was, she replied,—

“A little over twenty years, sir.”

“Have you a father and mother living?” I asked.

“Yes, sir, both.” This question greatly distressed her.

“Have you sisters and brothers?”

“Yes, sir, four; all younger than myself.”

“How long have you been from home, my girl?”

“Going on towards two years, sir,” was her answer.

“Have you ever written to your parents to tell them you are alive?”

“No, sir, I durst not; I have often thought I would, but when I tried I felt sick. I have so disgraced both them and myself that I dare neither go home nor write to them.”

“Have you attended the Sunday-school?”

“Yes, sir,”—weeping—“and I have had two Bibles and

a Church Service given to me by my teacher, for good conduct."

"And whatever made you leave home, my girl?—were your parents not kind to you?"

"O yes, sir, my parents were very good to me. We all attended a place of worship, and many times when we have been all going to school on a Sunday morning, father and mother watched us off, and seemed so pleased to see us all so nice going to a place of worship."

"Then why did you not remain at home, my child?"

"Well, sir, two neighbouring girls were often talking about wishing to see strange places and other towns, and we began daring each other about setting out. On one of our *wakes* we got all our better clothes, putting on as many as we could, and ran away, intending to get work at various places for a short time, and then go on further. We had each a few shillings with us. We thought we should like to see Liverpool, but before we got to Liverpool our money was all spent, though we walked all the way to save it."

"And what did you do in Liverpool without money?—did you get work?"

"No, sir; we each pawned part of our clothing, and the eldest girl persuaded us to go to the theatre. I never was in such a place before, and I felt very miserable; all the young men and young women seemed to be very wicked. After the play there was a ball; the wickedness of the ball was greater than at the theatre. I was miserable at both. I trembled and felt as if I should faint. The oldest girl laughed at me, and got me some spirits to drink. I never knew how we got to the place where we lodged. When I awoke in the morning, I was on a miserable bed in a dirty room; the other girls were still sleeping on the floor,

O how I wept that morning, and felt that I would give all the world if I was but at home again !”

“How long did you remain in Liverpool !”

“Several weeks ; we pawned everything off our backs that would fetch anything. We could not get work, and we did not much care. Every night, if we could raise the money, or get any one to pay for us, we went to the theatre. I was so wretched, I did not care what I did if it would smother my thoughts.

“One night the elder girl went out, and it was very late when she came back ; she had got some money and seemed very excited. In the morning she hurried us off out of the town, and we began tramping towards Fleetwood ; but the money was soon done, for we got drunk almost every day. Sometimes we lodged in night-houses, sometimes in lodging-houses, and sometimes under the hedges. When we got to Fleetwood we were more wicked than we had been at Liverpool. We were in a gin-palace one night when a terrible fight took place ; one man fell down at my feet with his head cut open ; we thought he was murdered. The police came and we ran into the fields. It was very cold and dark, and we agreed to stop in the fields all night and leave the town before daylight. I shall never forget that night. We felt very frightened, for though we had nothing to do with the fight we thought if the man was dead they would take us. We huddled altogether under some holly trees in a dry ditch, and wished we were home. We all cried, but when it began to rain large drops, followed by lightning and thunder, we clasped hold of each other and began to pray to God to have mercy upon us. I never expected to see morning, for I thought God would strike me dead for my wickedness. I called on my father and mother, and my

sisters and brothers by name ;—I was near going mad. After the thunder and lightning were over, it still rained, and we were all soaking with wet. I fell into a short troubled sleep, and thought I felt my little sister's arms around my neck. When at home I always taught her to say her prayers ; she knelt on my knee with her arms around my neck, and finished by saying,—

‘ Jesus, gentle Shepherd, hear me,
Bless Thy little lamb to-night ;
In the darkness be Thou near me,
Keep me safe till morning light.’

O ! how happy I felt in my dream, but when I awoke and found no little arm, or sweet little voice, but that I was almost drowned, stiff with cold, and two hundred miles away from home, I had a wish to die on the spot, though I knew my soul would be lost ; but I was in despair.”

“ How long had you been from home then ? ” I asked.

“ About nine months, sir.”

“ And how could you bear to think of the dreadful suffering of your parents, on your account, all this time ? ”

“ I knew they were suffering, but I durst not write or go home. I often imagined my father seeking me, and my mother lying awake weeping and wondering where I was, yet I durst not let them know.

“ After leaving Fleetwood, we set out on tramp for Scotland, begging our way, and, as before, sleeping in all sorts of places. We were some time in Glasgow, living very wicked lives. We visited other towns, and rambled on until we came to Hull. All the way we travelled, I felt a poor degraded creature, especially on the Sunday, when I saw other young women going to Church or Chapel ; I thought they were as happy as angels. When near Hull I began

to feel worn down, and was not able to walk many miles a-day. I well remember sitting by a clear stream of water one warm day, and wishing I was at the bottom ; my feet were swollen and bleeding, and I had been a long time without food.

“ As I sat looking into the river, I began to feel a strong desire to drown myself. I wept bitterly over my past conduct, and prayed for pardon before I jumped into the water, so that I might go to heaven, but still I feared going to hell. I felt it would be a very sad thing if my soul was lost ; still I wished to drown myself. Just then I again felt my little sister's arms round my neck, and again heard her say the prayer I had taught her,—

‘ Jesus, gentle Shepherd, hear me.’

I then began to weep as if my heart would break, and knelt down, asking God to have mercy on me and guide me home. Over my head was a large bird singing, and it seemed to say, ‘ Stop, another trial ; stop, another trial.’ I rose up and walked away from the river, and followed the other girls who had gone on before. When I overtook them they asked me why I was crying ; I told them my feet was sore, and I was weary, but did not tell them of my thoughts about destroying myself. When we got to Hull I fell sick, and was taken to the Union, from the Night Asylum. Here I remained on a sick-bed, suffering and weeping, and promising the Lord if he would spare me I would return home and lead a new life. While I was in the Union my two companions were in the town, living by picking pockets or any other way they could, and were waiting for me the day I came out. We went again on tramp to Sheffield, Boston, Manchester, Oldham, and Huddersfield.

“When at Huddersfield, a kind lady came into the lodging-house and talked with us ; she seemed in great trouble on our account. She read with us out of one of your books about poor Mary, and gave us each one. I saw on the back of the book where you lived, and was determined to come to Rochdale to see if you could get me home. I did not tell the other girls, for fear they would not let me come, but set off without them, and I do not know where they are now.”

“Well, my girl, yours is a sad story ; you have seen the world with a vengeance. What do you wish me to do for you ?” I asked.

“Write to my parents, sir, and ask them to take me home. O ! I wish you would, and God will bless you,” was her reply.

I did as she requested ; I wrote to her parents, honestly stating the condition of the girl, and her wish to return to her happy home. After sending the letter to the post, I took Julia to Smith’s lodging-house in King-street,—the same place where Joseph died in the hen-cote,—and requested Mrs. Smith to find her something to do, and take charge of her until she heard from me again.

Two days after, I received the following letter from her parents :—

“DEAR SIR,

“Your information of my misguided and long lost daughter has given a distracted family a little relief from the fear that something had happened to her. We all thought we should never see her, or hear of her again ; but thanks to God and your Christian benevolence, for which a distressed family will ever feel grateful. As to her return home, we shall be glad to receive her safe from your care,

but our means at present prevent us from sending the expenses of the journey, as we have a large family of children all unable to work. My health has been but poorly for a long time, and my dear wife has been very heavily afflicted in her mind through the non-knowledge of her lost child. But we shall, if you can by any means send her, be but too happy to receive her, and do the best we can for her amongst the rest of the children. Hoping that God will repay you, for we cannot at present, only with grateful feelings, and beg to remain, your most humble, and thankful servant,

“—————.”

The above letter was signed by the father of Julia. On receiving it I at once sent for Julia, and read the letter. While reading it, and when I came to the part which speaks of her mother's mental illness, Julia roared out in agony, crying, “O! mother, mother! dear mother, what have I done! O! how shocking to us all has been *my first wrong step*; whatever must I do? O my dear, dear parents! I have been bad to you, and now I am punished!” Long poor Julia wept over her father's letter, and when I told her I would send her home the following day by rail, she seemed ready to lick the dust at my feet.

Yes, thou poor wretched creature, the *first* wrong step has brought thee to a shocking state, and thousands besides thee. When the first wrong step is taken out of the path of duty, virtue, pleasantness, and peace, into the hard way of transgressors, it is a most awful step, entailing consequences to millions, so fearful that they are only really known to the lost in hell. How many are this moment in our penal settlements, prisons, poor-houses, hospitals, and penitentiaries; how many with desolate homes, ruined characters, ruined constitutions, and ruined prospects, who can

trace all to the first wrong step ! If there be no first step, there will never be a second. Julia had suffered much, suffered in her conscience when she took the first step from home, the first step into a den of infamy called a theatre, and the whirlpool of wickedness called a ball ; suffered after being first drunk ; suffered when she saw the almost murdered man fall at her feet in the gin-palace ; fearfully suffered the night of the terrible thunder storm,—drenched in rain in the dead of the night in a ditch. The only moment of happiness she mentions was when the arms of her little praying sister was round her neck ; but it was only a dream, a dream of home happiness, from which the first wrong step had driven her. Yes, she had suffered, but what must have been the suffering of her parents and all the family ? I have sometimes wished that the wrong-doer might be the only one to suffer ; but it is often the most innocent, loving, and affectionate, that have to endure the keenest anguish, through the bad conduct of those of their own family and fireside. When I see mothers pressing their lovely little ones to their breast and covering them with kisses, I have often mentally prayed that they might always be able to kiss them, and never wish they had not been born.

The following day I had to attend a gathering of the Mothers' Meetings, under the care of Mrs. Midwood, of Hollingworth, near Mottram, and sent down to Smith's lodging-house, requesting Julia to meet me at the railway station, at half-past two. Poor old Mrs. Smith brought her, and on my arrival I found them waiting for me. On arriving at Manchester I took a cab to the London-road terminus, but found she could not leave till a quarter-past six, while my train left at a quarter-past four. While talking with Julia at the station, I found her much troubled about

how she might venture to go into the house when she arrived, and concluded it would be best to telegraph for some one to meet her. She stood beside me in the office, and when the message was read, saying, "*Julia will arrive by the half-past ten train from Manchester; please meet her,*" she sat down on a box, and again wept bitterly.

I felt concerned at not being able to see her off, and tried to interest the station-master in her behalf, by showing him the letter from her father. He very kindly promised to see her right, and gave her in care to the guard on the line she had to travel. I bought her three cakes for the journey, and, having got her to promise to write me the first moment she could on getting home, took her hand to bid her farewell, and prayed that God would pardon and bless her. Long the poor creature held my hand, and sobbed out a farewell, with many blessings.

When the telegraph messenger ran to inform the parents that Julia would arrive by the half-past-ten train, he produced great excitement in the neighbourhood, but especially in the family. The little brothers and sisters laughed, and cried, and danced, and all begged they might go to meet her. The hours from five to ten o'clock seemed long hours, but, when the time drew near, father, mother, and three of the children, went with throbbing hearts to the station. The train was late, but at a quarter-past eleven the long absent child was locked in the wild embrace of ten fond arms, amid sobs and weeping. Poor Julia! she held down her head in shame; she felt a poor guilty thing; she knew how ragged and wretched her appearance was; but, miserable and degraded as she was, she was welcome,—the dead was alive again, the lost was found!

On returning from my Saturday night and Sunday engage-

ments, on the Monday morning, I found on my desk the following letter :—

“DEAR SIR,

“I write to let you know that we have received our daughter safe, and we will pray to God to keep her in the narrow path, and I hope God will bless you for what you have done for me and mine, and as soon as it is in my power I will pay back to you what she has cost you.

“_____.”

Both of the letters from Julia's father, as given above, are exact copies, with the exception of the name and residence, which I do not think it right to give ; and I am sure my readers will see the prudence of withholding them.

If this narrative of poor Julia's wanderings and sufferings shall be a warning to others, who, regardless of the sorrow and pain they inflict upon their parents and friends, are determined to *see the world*, my purpose will be answered. We are all tempted to do wrong, some more, some less, and “let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” Julia was tempted by two wicked companions to run from home, and she fell. I never see an old man or an old woman who has grown gray in the path of virtue, but I feel for them a deep veneration ; but at the same time I cannot help wondering whether their temptations have been as strong as those who have fallen by their side. Have they passed through the terrible tests that have overthrown their ruined brothers and sisters ? or have they had a firmer grasp of the hand of Him who alone can keep them from falling. I believe an ounce of grace will go as far in some as a pound in others. The meek disciple, John, did not seem to need so

much of his Master's care as the rough, headlong, fiery Peter; but it is a consolation for some of us to know that the pound of grace for the Peter can be as easily obtained as the ounce of grace for the John.

If Julia had taken notice of only two lines in that book given to her by her teacher for good conduct,—those two lines,—“If sinners entice thee, consent thou not,”—she would not have had to carry a scar on her conscience all the days of her life. She left the school, left her parents, left her little brothers and sisters, became a companion of fools, and however long she may live it will be a sore place in her memory. It is a mercy she did not perish on that day of her strong temptation, when she sat by the river. The thrush that was then singing in the trees over her head did not say, —“Stop, another trial; stop, another trial;” but she thought it did, and the song of that bird was to her a song of mercy. Her little sister's arms were not really round her neck, but she felt as if they were: this was another check to preserve her from destruction. The poor wanderer was getting sick of sin, and the Lord was mercifully preserving her from eternal destruction. I hope the lady who kindly spoke to Julia in the lodging-house at Huddersfield, urging her to give up her life of wickedness and return to her parents, will still visit those haunts of many a prodigal and lost one. One of them is now restored to her home, and her little sister's arms are again round her neck: may the gentle Shepherd keep them both!

Having recently to attend several meetings in the midland counties, and one of them being in the town where Julia's parents resided, I was glad of the opportunity to call and see them. I easily found the place, for I had the two letters

from the father with me. The door was open, and Julia, in amazement, called out my name. My presence was hailed with words of thankfulness, and with swimming eyes. Julia was greatly changed ; her appearance was now neat and respectable, and she had got back her own natural complexion instead of the wanderer's brown face. But she will never forget that FIRST WRONG STEP.



NO COTTON.

DURING a depression of business, about fifty years since, a local board for relieving the poor passed the foolish resolution, that every male person receiving parish aid should have the letter **P** stitched on the left arm, to point him out as a pauper. The **P**, about two inches in size, was cut out of red cloth, and intended as a badge of disgrace.

A good man, with a sickly wife and several small children, had long been unable to obtain employment, and was at last forced to go to the parish. The red **P** was stitched on his coat sleeve, and, as he was returning home, a thoughtless young man called out,—

“There goes a pauper ! There goes a pauper !”

“Yes, my young friend, but **P** stands for prince as well as pauper, for though I am poor at present, yet, by the grace of God, I am a child of God ; I am set among princes, even the princes of His people.”

It is well that amongst the English people,—and nowhere more than in Lancashire,—there is a deep repugnance to be classed under the red **P** ; hundreds would sooner suffer death. But, during the last three years, a terrible necessity has been laid upon hundreds of thousands of as honest, industrious, noble-hearted men and women as ever dwelt on God's earth, and these have been forced, with almost breaking hearts, to submit to what, a few years since, they would

have thought impossible. No tongue, no pen, will ever be able to tell of the open distress, or hidden and silent suffering, manfully endured by tens of thousands of mill-hands during the terrible cotton famine. The whole world has looked on in admiration of our patient, peaceable endurance.

Rochdale, though not the greatest sufferer, will long remember, with pain and sorrow, that period of her history, when the winds of the Atlantic no longer wafted the cotton-freighted ship to our shores ; when the long chimney no longer sent forth its dense volume of smoke ; when the last fibres of wool passed through the machine, and the million wheels of industry stood still ; when thousands and tens of thousands of artizans, with their wives and children depending upon their labour for bread, were seen quietly and thoughtfully gathering together, asking anxiously how long this thing would last. Then the more wealthy and affluent, forgetting all differences in religion and politics, began to form Committees of Investigation, determined to do all they could to help the poor. What a lesson have these periods of distress taught the different sects professing religion ! Why cannot we agree as well respecting feeding souls as we did then about feeding bodies ?

Our Committee consisted of a Quaker, our Vicar, an Independent Minister, the Catholic Priest, and the writer. Other Committees throughout the neighborhood were similarly constituted. Suitable books were provided for canvassing, and we soon found that fourteen thousand persons were requiring immediate help. Four large boilers, capable of supplying four hundred gallons of good, nutritious soup daily, were erected. Corn dealers, butchers, and grocers were contracted with for large supplies. Tickets were taken to the houses of the starving. Seven large rooms were pro-

vided for sewing-schools for the young women, to provide clothing, and keep up their industrious habits and self-respect, and adult schools and public works for the men, as far as possible. Every day, for many months, the tide of distress rolled deeper, and deeper, and deeper, until the scenes at all the Relief Boards became truly appalling. But the various Committees manfully stood to their posts, meeting and working, and many of them weeping, day after day. And let it be known that almost every man constituting the various Committees, who laboured night and day during this terrible struggle betwixt life and death, were professors of religion, and the active members of Christian churches. Teachers of the various Sunday-schools met to sympathize with, and assist the young under their care. The various churches throughout every county sent their contributions. Rich and poor, not only in our own, but other countries, sent their gifts, and even the Free States of America sent two ships laden with food. Never in the world's history was there such a general manifestation of feeling and sympathy for a distressed people. Yet, after all, the sufferings were intense, and the privations through which they had to pass were painful.

From early morn might be seen crowds of hungry men, women, and children at the various offices for relief. First came those who, being improvident in their habits, are at all times only a week from starvation or debt. Next came those who had been more careful, and held out much longer. But last of all came those who created the most commiseration, for they were the careful, saving, and truly respectable portion of the working-classes, who had determined to hold out to the last moment, but were compelled to submit to dire necessity. Many of them were members and officers of

Christian churches, and teachers in our Sabbath-schools. Many of these last comers can tell how, in various ways. He who never forgets His suffering children, mysteriously provided for them,—sending help from unknown sources, when all other means seemed to fail. One family, not greater sufferers than many, we select as an illustration.

One morning, before break of day, there was seen amongst the throng of people standing at the door of the relieving office, one who was there for the first time,—though it was many months after the office had been opened for the distribution of food. So numerous were the applicants this morning, that Richard was seven hours before he reached the place where he had to present his ticket. After obtaining his loaf of bread and small bag of meal, he returned home, hungry and cold, laid his bread and meal on the table, sat down near the small fire, bent down his head, and covering his face with his hands, said,—“This is hard work. I never thought we should come to this.”

The rest of the family looked at him, and the food he had brought, in silence and in tears; for though they were hungry, sorrow had so filled every heart, that none offered to partake of what he had brought home.

But Richard had been in the daily habit for many years of remembering God's mercies, whether great or small; and during these many years, when his cup of temporal blessings had been full, his songs and prayers had ascended to heaven. And, now that the hour of his bitterest trial was come, he could yet trust Him who is still able to multiply the loaves and fishes, and who numbers the sighs of those He loves. Turning round in his chair, he knelt down, and the rest of the family followed his example. In the fulness

of his heart he poured out his soul before Him who never turns a deaf ear to the cry of the poor.

“O Lord,” he said, “Thou hast not caused this distress, it comes from man’s wickedness. Thou knowest our poverty and our sorrow ; Thou knowest how we are in danger of disgracing Thy cause and the church with which we are connected, by not being able to pay our just debts. And Thou knowest how this pains our hearts more than all our want of sufficient food. But, blessed be Thy name, we are in Thy hands, and we will trust Thee through this dark dispensation, believing that Thou wilt in some way provide for us. Lord, help us to trust Thee, for thou hast told us to call upon Thee in the day of trouble, and Thou wilt deliver us.”

The debts that so troubled Richard, and to which he referred in his prayer, consisted of four pounds eighteen shillings for rent, one pound four shillings for coal, seven shillings for milk, and some smaller debts. When the mills stopped working he had ten pounds saved ; and though every penny of the ten pounds had been carefully spent, yet the continued want of employment had, in spite of every effort, involved him in these debts. This caused him continued uneasiness, for debts are sore tortures to an honest mind. But Richard’s prayer was true. God had not sent the distress, for He had sent a gracious harvest ; but it came from the wickedness of man, and more especially from that sum-total of all wickedness, the man-stealer.

I have in my possession a flour-tub. Wishing to keep this tub as a memento of the purpose for which it came over the Atlantic, I had it cleaned, painted, and varnished, and lettered as follows, on one side :—

“I am one of the thousands that were filled with flour,

hold of the slaver, while the aged and infirm are left to perish broken-hearted.

The horrors of the middle passage do not admit of description. Gnawing hunger, burning thirst, madness, suffocation, and death ;—bodies cast overboard, to be devoured by the shark, who ever fattens in the wake of the slave-ship, from the banks of the Gambia to the American shores of the Atlantic. Thirty thousand have been annually torn from their homes to supply this horrid traffic. Thousands die on the road broken-hearted ; and those that survive are sent to toil on the cotton-grounds, under the lash of the taskmaster, and deliberately worked to death. For American slaveholders, publicly and openly, have decided that it is *more profitable* to work them to death, and buy new ones, than to prolong their lives by humane treatment. If they attempt to escape they are shot, or hunted down by bloodhounds. By law, if seven of them are found together, without a white man, they are all flogged. To give or sell them a Bible, or any other book, subjects the person that dares do so to a fine of two hundred dollars. If found holding a prayer-meeting, any magistrate can, without trial, order them twenty lashes each. They are often forced to flog each other,—sons their mothers, and fathers their daughters. The American Slave States are one great conspiracy to insult, degrade, debauch, murder, and damn the poor slave,—and all for dollars !

But the knell of slavery is sounded. The vampire that has sucked the blood of one of earth's continents has received its death-wound. The prayers of the black man *have* gone up to Him who says,—“ Vengeance is mine, and I will repay.”

Richard, like hundreds of thousands of the cotton hands in Lancashire, knew why he was suffering, and, like others,

was willing to suffer still more, if it should result in the freedom of the down-trodden Negro. He had been three years with only a few days' work ; yet, during those three years he had never lost confidence in God's power to provide for himself and his household. To a friend who was speaking to him about his circumstances, he replied,—

“ We have sat down scores of times to nothing but bread and water, yet, with the blessing of God with it, we have been as strong and as hearty as if we had dined on roast beef and plum-pudding every day.”

But the third year was to Richard a time of almost continual trials. Clothing was wearing out ; his debts were increasing by little and little. He owed four quarters' rent for his pew in the place of worship he attended, besides the rent of his house. At last he received a note, demanding the payment of his house-rent, or an execution would be immediately served upon him. This may seem cruel, but his landlord's entire living consisted of the rents derived from a few cottage houses. When Richard received the note he was very miserable for several days. Had he been the only sufferer, he had many friends in the church who would gladly have rendered him help ; but they were nearly all like himself, and could render him no assistance. Day after day, for several weeks, he, in private, and at the family altar, laid his case before his heavenly Father,—still believing some way would be opened out for him. Richard's Christian experience at this trying season was, like many others in the same church, one of mingled joy and sorrow. They all stood in need of some counteracting influence, and to them the various means of grace, and especially the Sabbath-day, were times when heaven seemed let down to earth. The communion of saints, the songs and prayers of

the sanctuary, the sweet promises of the Word, and the comforting influence of the Holy Spirit, often gave a depth to joy, and a sublimity to hope, which lifts the soul of the believer immeasurably above the sorrows of the wilderness, and nerves him with double energy for the coming conflict.

Those who imagine that the Christian's joys are all prospective, know but little of Christianity. The moment a man becomes savingly converted, heaven within him has begun. The Jews had ten possessions on the other side of Jordan, but they had two on this side. Christ is gone to prepare mansions in glory for those that love him, but He sends us the Comforter while we are on our way to those mansions. It is painful to hear worthy persons in our experience-meetings everlastingly talking about the "realms of the blest," and the "land of pure delight," as if no delight or blessings were to be had before we go there. Such Christians miss many joys by not seeking those joys *in Christ here*. Habakkuk declared he would rejoice in the Lord, although everything was swept away. Paul could glory in tribulation, if the power of Christ rested upon him. And Peter, with Christ, could say,—“Master, it is good to be here.” Heaven, we know, will be a glorious home,—glorious beyond all that we can conceive ; but let us try, by faith and love, to sing while on our way there, and daily trust in Him who loves to see us happy.

Richard was one of those who did not go to meet trouble ; he did his best, and left the rest with God. Though he was now hourly expecting the coming of the bailiffs to take all his goods, yet he never lost faith that a way would be opened for him. He never missed the social means of grace, or public worship, for these were among his well-springs of joy and peace. His trials were now very heavy, but those heavy

trials brought him nearer to his God, and made him more earnest for deliverance. At last that deliverance came, as deliverances often do, from a quarter the most unlikely. One of the family, meeting the overlooker of the mill at which Richard worked, the man carelessly said,—

“Well, how are you coming on? Is it true you are going to be sold up?”

The answer was given in a few quiet words; when the overlooker replied,—

“Indeed! Indeed! Well, I have five pounds in my pocket; here, take it to Richard, and tell him he can pay me back when he is able, and not till then.”

Away ran the happy bearer of the five pounds, and reached home panting for breath. Laying down the money on the table, she exclaimed,—

“We are saved! we are saved! Let the bailiffs come when they like, we are ready for them!”

The sight of the five pounds had a strange effect on all the family, and they first joined in a crying chorus, and then all knelt down to return thanks for this, to them, very great mercy.

And they were saved: the clock, the cupboard, the drawers, the bookcase, the pictures, the beds, the table, and the old arm-chair were still to remain together. The warrant of distress for rent was not served; the bailiffs did not come; and this poor victim of the cotton famine fell on his knees, and thanked God for sending deliverance. And it was a deliverance! To be “sold up,”—to have the precious pieces of furniture bought on the marriage-day, given by friends, or bequeathed by parents,—every one of which is a memento of some event of either joy or sorrow, and all to their poor possessors of great value,—to have these torn

from them, and hopelessly scattered, is one of the real calamities of this life ; it stamps the memory with a pang that the longest life will not efface. And it is one of the comforts I feel, while writing these lines, that I have been the means of preventing four homes from being broken up by the auctioneer during the cotton famine, by the funds furnished to me by the friends of the poor.

Richard had just escaped the auctioneer, and had removed to another cottage, when I heard of his trouble. His wife, whose health was never very good, had suffered so much in consequence of the troubles through which they were called to pass, that she was mostly confined to bed. Richard's debts were not all paid, especially the coal bill, about which he had often been "dunned." There was yet no cotton, no work of any description to be had ; no money, but what came from the Relief Board, or a few friends. One of these friends, almost as poor as the rest, one day carried Richard eleven oatcakes, and another took him a little flesh meat.

I had received, from some private soldiers in India, through Mr. Shepherd, of Silverdale, Lancaster, one pound twelve shillings, to be given to some special case of suffering caused by the cotton famine. I sent my visitor with one pound of this money for Richard, and a little wine for his sick wife. The twelve shillings I gave him afterwards. When my visitor laid the sovereign and the wine upon the table, the heart of Richard was so full of thankfulness and gratitude, that for some time he was overwhelmed with the depth of his emotions. The gift was a very timely one, and was acknowledged with gratitude in the way most in keeping with their feelings. All knelt down, the visitor

and the family, and Richard, in his simple and humble way, said,—

“Lord, Thou art good, ⁴Thou art very good. I have trusted Thee long, and I can trust Thee still. Thy promises to Thy children are as firm as the everlasting hills. Thou hast said, ‘Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure.’ Thou hast said, ‘Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee.” We have called. and Thou hast again and again delivered ⁵us, and Thou wilt do so till our last moment on earth ; and then, if we are faithful, we shall go to where we shall be hungry no more.”

All rose from their knees, but all had received a greater blessing than sovereigns can bestow. O how precious is gratitude ! It is this that makes the morsel of the poor man so sweet ; and while he is acknowledging the goodness of God who gave it, he experiences a pleasure that exceeds description. It is this that gives a relish to the simple repast, and it is the want of this that makes affluence and riches a burden : where there is no gratitude there is no real pleasure.

When my visitor returned and informed me of the affecting scene witnessed in the humble cottage of poor Richard, it was evident that both the bearer and the receiver had partaken of mutual pleasure. And so it ever will be. He who has said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” and, “He that watereth ⁶others, himself shall be watered,” has tied *doing good* and *getting good* together.

O think it not a little thing
To lessen but one throbbing pain ;
The act will surely with it bring
To you its own reward again !
To wipe one tear from sorrow’s eye,
Ourselves will feel the greater joy.

The mill at which Richard should be working is still shut up. Little debts are still unpaid, but Richard is keeping a book, in which he puts down every penny given or lent him, and declares that when cotton comes again, if health and strength be still given him, he will return every penny ; and if they will not receive it, he will give it to some poor worn-out old men and women, or to some charity. I hope his wish may be granted, and by that time he will be near those mansions, where the inhabitants can never suffer because there is No COTTON.



MY YOUNG RAGGED FRIENDS.

ONE of my ragged acquaintances, whom I had met at various times, always greeted me with a smile. She had frequently an old basket, sometimes turned wrong side up, on her head, and at other times swinging it by the broken handles. A few weeks ago, as I was turning the corner of School Lane, I heard her calling out,—

“Good morning, Mr. Ashworth, how are you?”

“Good morning, Lizzie, and where are you going to-day?”

“I am going a-begging, for you see I am like to look after my father and mother; for my mother is now very poorly, and my father cannot do anything. If he had not a little pension we should have to die, or go to the workhouse. You know my mother was very poorly when you saw her, but she is worse now.”

“And do they send you out to beg, my child?”

“Yes sir, for you know it helps up a little,” was her reply.

“But you should not beg; I am afraid you will become a wicked girl if you grow up a beggar.”

“Well, sir, I will not always beg; but they send me out, and tell me I must get something.”

A few weeks after this morning's conversation, on my return home very late one evening, I was informed that a little girl, living in a lodging-house in Church Lane, and calling

herself Elizabeth Johnson, had been at my house three times wanting me to go to read and pray with her mother, who was dying, and that she was weeping every time she came. One of my visitors and scripture-readers went to see the mother, and reported the poor creature in a weak state. A short time after, little Lizzie came again, weeping, to tell me her mother was dead, and to ask me if I could find her an old black frock to go to the funeral.

"I have not got anything at present that will do for you, but if you can find a second-hand one, and tell me how much it costs, I will pay for it," I replied.

The overseers of the poor provided a coffin, and dues, and preparation was made for interring the poor wasted mother of little Lizzie.

Perhaps nowhere is the social position of the dead more completely revealed than in the contrast presented at funerals. The solemn peal of the muffled bell—the silent mutes in their sable robes—the nodding plumes of the stately hearse, drawn by black, prancing steeds, and followed by the mourning coaches and the carriages of the wealthy friends, all tell of the rich man's funeral,

Who died on a bed of down,
And was laid in a marble tomb.

Such funerals we have often seen pass beneath the lofty arches of our beautiful cemetery.

But few scenes have been witnessed more affecting than the funeral of Lizzie's mother. She had breathed her last in a common lodging-house, amongst strangers; her only earthly comfort was to have her eyes closed by her feeble husband and her only child. On the day of her burial, when the pauper's hearse came to remove her remains to their last

resting-place, there was not one living being to follow her to the grave but her little weeping, half-clad child ; and as the lonely little thing followed its parent through the various streets, hundreds of persons stood still to gaze on the affecting scene. It was a calm, sweet Sabbath, the 30th of October, when Lizzie Johnson followed her mother through the gate of tears. Many persons were then visiting the last resting-place of their once-loved ones ; but the sight of the strange funeral drew them round the sorrowing child ; and though none of them knew who it was who lay in the coffin, yet all hearts beat in sympathy for the solitary mourner, and they all crowded round the pauper's grave.

In reply to a few feeling questions by one of the spectators, Lizzie told them of her mother's sickness and death, of her step-father's illness, and of her temporary home in a lodging-house. A subscription was opened for her on the spot, and thirteen shillings and threepence collected. A kind-hearted woman, hearing of the case, was so affected that she offered to take and adopt Lizzie for her own child. The money was given into the hands of a policeman, who accompanied Lizzie to the lodgings, intending to give it to her father, but he found him in such a state of drunkenness, that he dared not trust him with it ; so he brought the money to me, with a request I would take charge of it for the daughter.

When I sent for Lizzie, and told her of the offer made by the kind woman, to take her for her own, send her to the Sunday-school, teach her a trade, and be a mother to her, her little eyes brightened up with joy ; and when, in a few days after, she called to pay me a visit, in company with her new mother, so changed was her appearance, that few people who had seen her in the cemetery would have known her to be the same. I gave her the money and a new petticoat,

my heart full of thankfulness that He who promises to take care of the helpless, had provided such a home for this poor, motherless, and worse than fatherless child.

On the morning of the same day that my young friend interred her mother, I was requested to visit an acquaintance who lay sick in the workhouse. On passing the prison, which stands near the workhouse, and seeing the wife of the gaoler standing at the door, we entered into conversation about some young boys who were then locked up awaiting their trial for stealing. The woman seemed much concerned about the wretched home example, and gloomy prospects of some of the young criminals.

On opening the strong doors and iron gate, we ascended the steps leading to the various cells, and on drawing the slides of each cell door, that I might see and speak with the inmates of those dismal abodes of penal suffering, a thin streak of light, from a small, high grated window, enabled me to recognize several of my other young friends. One of them, called Stanton, seemed delighted to see me.

"And you are here, my boy! how is this?" I asked.

"They say I have been stealing, sir."

"And where is your elder brother? for I have not seen him lately," I asked.

"He is gone to Manchester New Bailey prison for stealing, too, and will not have come back yet."

"And whatever does your mother say?—you will break her heart by being such bad lads."

"No, not us; she does not care, for she is nearly always drunk. You know her, don't you? She came to you last week to beg a pair of clogs for herself. I have the clogs on which you gave me."

"And where is your father? Does he know you are here?"

"He lives a long way off, with another woman : he is like my mother, he does not care for us."

"How long is it since you were at the Sunday-school, Stanton?"

"A long while since ; I am so ragged I cannot for shame go, but I wish I was there now."

This last sentence was accompanied by a burst of weeping.

Yes, thought I, there is an amazing difference betwixt this dark, dismal dungeon, this sickening, gloomy cell, and the bright, cheering, happy class, in a blessed, joyful Sunday-school. Never did their glorious, heavenly character, so powerfully impress my mind as at this moment. Looking at them from this miserable cavern, they seemed to be like gardens of paradise, or realms of the blessed. Happy boys, and happy girls, whom precious Sabbaths find in the ever-blessed Sunday-school, who can sing, and feel as they sing—

"I have been there, and still would go ;

"Tis like a little heaven below !"

And God bless thee, my poor, poor little imprisoned friend ; they have sentenced thee to be once whipped, and to endure three months confinement in gaol, for it was not thy first offence. But this is not thy greatest misfortune—thy own words tell of thy greatest calamity :—"My father is living with another woman, and my mother drinks, and does not care for us."

While I am making a few strokes in my diary, to remind me of my visit to the prison, a little intelligent-looking, but poor and ragged creature, creeps softly to the top of my office stairs, anxious, yet evidently afraid, to tell me his errand.

"You want to say something to me, my boy ; what is it ? —come, let me hear."

"Well, sir, you know, a long time since, you bought me a new pair of clogs, with old tops. I have been making them last as long as ever I could, but I am now at the far end; if the factories had been running I could have done without coming to you. But I have done very little. You see all my clothing is nearly worn to bits, and the bottoms are nearly all gone out of my clogs. If work will begin I shall be better off, and then I shall not be so ragged and poor as I am."

The little fellow blushed while he was addressing me, but spoke with great earnestness, and his eyes were swimming with tears.

"What is your name? and where do you live?"

"My name is Tommy Jones, and I live in Durham-street, I did live in Mason-street."

"What does your father do?"

"I have no father."

"Where is your mother? Can she do nothing for you?"

"My mother is in the workhouse, and I live with my sister; but she cannot much help me."

"How is it that your mother is in the workhouse? Is she old or poorly?"

"O no, it is her own fault. You know she went wrong; if she had not gone wrong, I think we could have got along very well."

"What do you mean by going wrong? Did she go out of her mind?"

"O no, she went away and left the door locked, and brother Edward and me were without anything to eat for more than a day. Edward was once three days, and I was two, and we were both nearly poorly; we walked all over the town seeking for her, and when we could not find her,

we did not like to tell anybody ; and we slept in pig-cotes and coal-houses, and anywhere we could get,”

“ And where was your mother, my lad ? ”

“ Why, she was drinking.” Here the little fellow held down his head to hide his grief.

“ Drinking ! drinking ! your mother drinking ! then it is no wonder you are ragged and poor.”

“ Yes, and she pawned the clock for drink, and sold the ticket for two shillings, and drank that. She took the sheets off the bed and sold them for drink. My brother Edward had saved a few shillings in a box, to buy a new jacket, but she broke the box and took all he had saved, and drank that too.”

“ Your shirt seems a poor one, my lad ; when was it washed ? ”

“ I cannot have it washed, for it will come all to pieces, and I could not get it on again ; and this jacket I have on is my brother Edward’s, but he lets me put it on.”

“ When did you see your mother last ? ” I asked.

“ Well, I went to take her a half-ounce of tobacco the other day, and I saw her then. My mother would be a very decent mother if she did not drink. She says she will never drink again,” he replied.

Poor little man ! who could turn thee away without helping to lessen thy sorrow ? for thy tale of distress is true. My visitor, who was present, and heard these statements, knows they are not overstated. I did what I could for him ; gave him a note for his clogs, and also two good, new, boy’s shirts that I happened to have at hand, and sent Tommy Jones home quite overjoyed, but could not forget his sad tale about his drunken mother.

While penning these lines, I see a pair of clogs hanging

beside me, whose history is not a little painful. Not many days since, another of my young friends, called Sarah M'Kenzie, of King-street, came smartly up the stairs, and, with remarkable eloquence, told me that her mother had sent her to ask me for a note for a pair of clogs. The sight of the dear young creature told its own tale ; her bare feet were red with cold, and her thin, tattered clothes were little calculated to keep the body warm. I knew her mother, and knew enough of her not to respect her ; but I could not stand proof against the appeals of the suffering child, and gave her an order to go to the clogger. In about two hours after, she came smiling down the street, quite proud of her new clogs ; not one of all the many persons that walked or rode up and down the street, was happier in their possessions than my little ragged friend, Sarah M'Kenzie, was of her precious warm covering for her feet. She laid them carefully by when she went to bed ; but the poor, little, heart-broken creature has never seen them since ; for, whilst she soundly slept in her miserable bed that night, her mother pawned them for drink ; and again her sorrowing child walks about in a cold November, with her bare, red feet.

When I heard of this cruel, heartless conduct of the mother, I sent my visitor to demand the pawn-ticket, fetch them out, and bring them back again ; and here they are, for if I was to give them to the child again, I should only be furnishing the worse than brutish mother with money to drink.

But of all my little ragged friends, there is none I have felt, and still feel, so much interest in as poor, feeble, affectionate Tommy Pollitt. My acquaintance with Tommy began a few months since, as I was passing the same place, near the end of School lane, where I met Lizzie the morn-

ing she was going a-begging. As I neared the place, an old woman was lifting up both hands, and, at the top of her voice, calling out,—

“My heart fair warchies [aches], my heart fair warches, poor little thing! My heart fair warches for him!”

On turning round she saw me, and called out, “Here Mr. Ashworth comes, and I will tell him all about it. Do come here, Mr. Ashworth, and I will show you a sight that makes my heart fair warch.”

I followed the old woman with the aching heart, and we entered the most dirty, miserable home I ever beheld in my life, and that is saying a great deal. In one corner of this wretched room down stairs, there was something called a bed, consisting of filthy straw covered over with filthier rags. Amongst these lay a young sickly lad, almost worn to a skeleton; his head hung down at one end, for he had no pillow, nor anything higher than the straw on which he lay. The old woman led me near the bed, crying,—“Come here, come here! God bless thee, my child, but thou art a poor object!” Then turning to me, she said,—

“See, Mr. Ashworth, this lad, little as he looks, is fourteen years old. He hurt the spine of his back by falling down the stairs several years since; and he is a poor suffering creature; he never lies in the right place in bed or out, his pain is so great. All the clothing he had was a pair of trousers—he rolled them up for a pillow to lay his weary head on; but his mother is on the fuddle, and she has taken the child’s trousers and popped them for drink. Poor thing! my heart fair warches for him, and I feel as if I could kill her if I had her here.”

Little Tommy looked me in the face, with an expression of pain, sorrow, and fear; and, with tears in his eyes, said,—

"Mr. Ashworth, will you tell my mother that I did not tell you about the trousers? You know they were not worth much: and I want you to say that I did not tell you that she had sold them."

"But why do you wish me to say to your mother that you have not told me, Tommy?"

"Why, because she will abuse me; I know she will. Do say I did not tell you."

"Yes, my lad, I can truly say that, for you have not told me. Is there anything I can do for you, Tommy?"

For a few moments he looked at me, evidently full of something he was anxious to say, and at last said, in a whisper,—“Will you talk to me about Jesus Christ?”

Never, never, shall I forget my feelings, when poor, wasted, suffering little Tommy, on his miserable bed of straw, robbed by his drunken mother of the very pillow from under his sinking head, requested me to talk with him about Jesus! O, what a thrill of joy ran through my soul! What a blessed change came over my thoughts and feelings! In a moment I was seated on the broken chair beside his bed, talking with Tommy about the love of Jesus.

"Do you think He will take me to heaven soon, Mr. Ashworth? for I want to go, for I am so weary."

"Do you love Jesus, Tommy, my child?"

"Yes, sir, I think I do. Does He love me?"

"Yes, I am sure he does, if you love Him. And if you love Him, and pray to Him to make you ready for heaven, He will hear your prayers and make you very happy, even on your sick bed."

Just then the mother came staggering in, and, walking up to the bed, looked me in the face with a fierce, fiendish look, saying,—

"I do not thank you for coming here. If my boy wants anything, his father and me can get it for him. You are none of my religion, and I shall not let you talk to him."

I returned the stern look, at the same time saying,—

"What have you done with your Tommy's trousers. You have taken them from under his head, and pawned them for drink."

She cast a terrible look at the poor sick child. He saw the look and trembled with fear ; but I soon set him right by saying,—

"Tommy did not tell me, and he begged I would say to you he had not told me. An old woman up the street, that brought me in to look at him, told me. How much have you pawned them for?"

For some time she would not speak ; but at last gruffly said,—"Sixteen pence."

"Well, here is seventeen pence, go and fetch them back, and I will wait till you return."

The moment she was gone, Tommy thanked me for saving him from being abused ; and we again began to talk about Jesus. O, how precious to me were those moments ! I cared far more about my little Christian inquirer, far more about leading his longing mind to the Lamb of God, than seventeen pence twenty times told.

When the mother returned she rolled up the trousers, and rather roughly placed them under his head ; but it was evident he was greatly afraid of her ; and when I took my leave of him, asking him if I might call again, he durst not speak, but his eyes said, Yes.

When I got home I sent a new shirt for the sick lad, for he told me he had but one, and he wanted it washed ; and

soon after I called again to see Tommy, to talk with him about Jesus. I found him still very weak, and greatly suffering. *Yes and I found his head again hanging down the end of his straw bed, for his mother had again pawned his pillow, from under his head for drink !*

As I stood beside my dear young friend ; stood to see his wasted form—his wretched miserable home, and more wretched bed ; when I saw his young face looking aged with suffering ; when I thought of his drunken father, and his still more drunken mother, my heart melted with pity, and my soul was heavy with sadness. Oh ! how I longed to see him die while I stood there, that his spirit might wing its way to Jesus, of whom he loved to speak.

No man, no angel, can tell the terrible sufferings that thousands of the young are made to endure, in consequence of the cruelty of their drunken, wicked parents. The hot-beds of young criminals are in their own wretched homes. If Lizzie escapes early ruin, it will be because of a providential interference. The little imprisoned Stanton will have to return from the whip and the gaol to his drunken, sinful mother. Tommy Jones wept over his poverty and rags, the pawned clock and bed-sheets, having to be two days without food, and to sleep with the pigs and in coal-houses, all caused by her who ought to have been his chief comfort and joy. Sarah M'Kenzie had rejoiced over the new clogs I had given her to cover her cold red feet, and laid them carefully by when she went to bed, but tears ran down her cheeks in the morning, when she found they had been pawned for drink. And the feeble, afflicted little Tommy Pollitt, daily expecting to die on his wretched bed of straw, had his trousers twice taken from under his head, and by his heartless parent

pawned for drink. Well might he say,—“I wish the Lord would let me die and go to Jesus.”

But Tommy still lives, and is not forgotten. A few days since I called to see him, and to talk with him again about Jesus; for to me he is the most interesting of all my YOUNG RAGGED FRIENDS.



THE LOST CURL.

FORTUNE-TELLING is not so difficult as some people imagine, for is it not true that

“ Feathers show how the wind blows,
And straws tell how the current flows ? ”

And is it not also true that, in some shape, we have all our *straws* and *feathers*, which give to the observing and experienced such insight into our character, as enables them to foretell, with tolerable certainty, what will befall us in after days ? For instance, I never see a man spending his money and time in a public-house, but I know that man is sowing dragon's teeth, and will have a terrible harvest ; nor do I ever see a woman neglecting her own household duties to gossip with her neighbours, but I know her children are not likely to call her blessed. I never saw a young lad with a cigar or short pipe in his mouth, who has turned his back on the church or Sunday-school, and can talk about his father as the “ old governor,” and his mother as the “ old woman,” trying to make himself look big by scoffing at things serious, but I know that young man is mixing a bitter cup for somebody, but one more bitter still for himself. Nor do I ever see a young woman decked in showy finery, trying to attract everybody's notice,—preferring Sunday walks to Sunday-schools, places of amusement to places of worship, and foolish companions to fireside duties,—but I

am certain that sorrow is close at her heels. I know not how many books have been written on fortune-telling, but I know of one book that tells fortunes with amazing certainty ; and in one passage it declares, that WHAT WE SOW WE MUST ALSO REAP. One illustration of this unerring truth, we give in the following narrative.

Some of my readers will remember that, in my younger years, I resided in a village just outside the town of Rochdale, called Cut-Gate. In this village there was one public-house and two grocers' shops. One of these shops was kept by an elderly widow, of considerable energy and spirit ; and, to help her in the business and household affairs, she obtained the assistance of a relative, a young female about nineteen or twenty years of age.

The appearance of this young woman in our rural hamlet caused a little stir amongst its inhabitants ; for in most villages everybody knows everybody, looks after everybody, and minds everybody's business, sometimes better than their own. Had she gone to reside in some large town, she might have lived and died without her next door neighbour knowing her name. But not so in our group of country cottages. We all soon knew that her aunt called her Nanny, and the young women soon knew that she held her head a little above any of them, besides outstripping them in her style of dress ; for she was often seen in light, showy gowns, curls or ringlets, and a large scalloped shell comb to fasten up her back hair. One or two girls, the most foolish in the village, bought large combs, and tried to curl their hair like Nanny, but none of them could compete with her. This caused not a little envy and mortification.

But it was not our females only that was influenced by the new arrival ; for some of the young men began to pull

up their shirt-collars, stretch down their coat tails, and pay more than usual attention to the brushing of their hats and shoes, with a distant hope that they might not be entirely overlooked. After some time, one of these young men was seen arm-in-arm with Nanny, taking a Sunday walk ; and from that time it was generally understood that Robert and Nanny were engaged.

One fine Sunday afternoon, almost all the inhabitants of our village turned out to see what, perhaps, had never been seen amongst us before. Two horses, saddled and bridled, stood at the grocer's door—one with a lady's side-saddle on. While the children were gathered round the horses and the villagers stood at their doors looking for the riders, out came Robert and Nanny, both finer than we had ever seen them before. He had on a white waistcoat, and she a long, light dress, and more curls than ever. He assisted her to mount, and both set off at a canter, quite astonishing every one of us ; for all were looking on with open eyes and mouth. When they had got out of sight, one old woman exclaimed,—

“ Well, that caps all ! If Robert weds yon lass, drapers will have to give him long credit.”

“ Yes,” replied another, “ he will not need to go to old Thaniel to have his fortin' toud. I can tell him mysel.”

“ Has she ony brass, I wonder ?” observed the first speaker.

“ Brass ! Not her, indeed. I asked her aunt, and she said she was as poor as me ; and I am poor enough, everybody knows,” replied the other. “ Besides, what can *he* have ? He is only a working man. Twice nought is nought, and nought will not keep folks on horseback.”

It was about this period that the circumstance took place

which gives the title to this narrative. The cottage in which I resided was two doors from the grocer's shop. One room next to the shop was used as a warehouse, and behind this room was a small place, called the parlour. One afternoon, when I was about seven years of age, I was helping in the warehouse, and was terribly frightened by a loud scream in the little parlour. I ran to see the cause, and there stood Nanny, the very picture of despair, looking at a large lock of her hair that lay, along with the curling tongs, on the floor. Her aunt, having also heard the scream, came running to see what was the matter. Seeing the lock of hair on the floor, she began to scold her niece, declaring that, if she had been a minute, she had been two hours before the glass curling ; and, if she lived, she would have something more to scream about than the loss of a few hairs from her head. Nanny, full of indignation, turned round to the glass, and began combing out her hair for a fresh start, minding, however, not to have the curling-tongs too hot the next time, lest she might burn off another precious curl.

Soon after this event, the village was all astir to gaze at a rather merry wedding party, going and returning from the church, and again the wise people were making their predictions. One old man wondered how long it was since either bride or bridegroom had been inside a church before, observing that he wished them much happiness, but something more than a wish was required to make people happy.

This merry wedding party was that of Robert and Nanny. I have no objection to people being merry ; I like to see proper mirth and joy ; but I do think, if there be one day in our lives that is an important day, it is that on which we link our destiny with one who will be to us a blessing or a curse. A fiddling wedding is very often a foolish wedding.

For several months after the marriage, the young couple seemed all right, but it was remarked that Robert did not attend so well to his work as formerly. The reason of this was, he intended to change to some other business or trade, for his new wife did not think a blacksmith was sufficiently respectable ; and at her persuasion he left the forge, and commenced business as a wholesale dealer in malt.

Respectable, indeed ! Is not all useful labour respectable ? Is there not a real dignity in such labour ? Many a man who, through pride, has left honourable employment for questionable speculation, after having his high notions rolled in the mud, has been glad to creep back to his true position. "Respectable is as respectable does," is a maxim which applies to every grade of society.

Soon after entering into the malt trade, it was evident to all that knew Robert that a great change was coming over him. From being sprightly and cheerful, he became silent and thoughtful. To get custom, he spent much time in public-houses, and this soon began to tell on his appearance. He began to prefer the public-house to his own. He was deficient in what all dealers in malt especially require—self-control ; and very soon malt controlled him, as it has controlled millions. Oh, that malt ! that malt ! If one could collect the myriads of wretched children, whose pale faces are smitten by early sorrow, or stamped with the impress of early crime, and ask them why they are in rags, tatters, and tears, the answer would be "MALT !" If one could stand on the top of St. Paul's, and shout with a voice that could be heard in every miserable home in England, and ask—"Why are you miserable ?" the answer from thousands of breaking hearts would be "MALT !" Or if the same voice, turning to the hundreds of prisons, with their almost count-

less ruined inmates, should ask why these pests of mankind are chained, behind locks, bolts, and bars, the response would be "MALT !" Or if we could stand on the brink of perdition, and ask the lost souls what brought them into that place of endless woe, the reply from doomed millions, like the roaring of many thunders, would be "MALT !" No tongue, no pen, can ever describe what misery, ruin, sorrow, and crime MALT has produced.

Robert, finding that he was sinking in health and circumstances, wished to give up his destructive business ; but no ! his proud wife would not hear a word of it. For, though she knew that his credit was bad, still she kept up her style of dress and showy appearance ; and he, like many a poor, struggling husband, had a millstone hung round his neck, by a foolish, showy, proud wife ; as many a hard-working, honest father has been made to carry continual sorrow, through the extravagance and vanity of proud, showy daughters.

I have often been pained both in our churches and chapels, by seeing the dignity, pomp, style, and evident self-admiration with which many of these gaily dressed females enter the house dedicated to humble devotion and prayer, as if God Almighty were indebted to them for coming, and to hear them afterwards descanting on the dresses, and especially the bonnets, of those that were present.

"Did you see Mrs. and Miss Edwards at the church yesterday ?" asks one.

"Yes ; what style ! How did you like their bonnets ?" asks another.

"Not very well ; I don't think peach trimmings suit her complexion ; mauve, or majenta would do much better."

"Did you see Mrs. Phillips? She likes plenty of colour in her trimmings. Is her husband doing much business?"

"I don't know, but I think he should be, for she costs no little to keep her pomp, for

They have the longest bills
Who wear the most frills."

"What was the text on Sunday morning? for I have quite forgot," asks the first speaker.

Well, you are as bad as me, for I don't remember the text, or much of the sermon, only it was something about the Jews."

This is only a small sample of what may be heard every week, from a class of persons who seem to consider the church as only a place for showing fashions; and it is quite time that ministers of the Gospel speak out on the question, for some of our sanctuaries are becoming places of gaiety, almost as much as the ball-room.

While I do not believe in a religious dress—for I don't think religion consists in the shape of either coat, hat, or bonnet—yet I am persuaded, that, as a rule, the dress is an indication of the mind.

If one quarter of the time was spent in adorning the heart and in thoughtful preparation for the worship of the sanctuary, that is spent before the glass, in decking and adorning the frail, dying body, heaven would gain many precious souls that will never enter there; for, I firmly believe that many of our females think more about the shape of their bonnet, than the salvation of their soul.

Isaiah spoke of such in his day. Walking with wanton eyes; mincing as they go; with chains, bracelets, and mufflers; head-bands, tablets, and ear-rings; mantles, wimples, and crimping-pins. These had all their doom predicted. It came,

and come it ever will, for "the Lord hateth a proud look." How immeasurably must such a tawdry thing be below the beauty mentioned by Paul—adorned in modest apparel; not with brodered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but with modesty and good works. Isaiah's mincers have ruined thousands; Paul's beauties never one. They are no expensive shams, but ornaments and blessings to every husband, every father, and every home. They are infinitely to be preferred, as wives, to mantles, whimples, and crimping-pins, and will be preferred by every sensible man. Well had it been for Robert had he chosen such a wife.

Robert's malt business was a failure. His circumstances became desperate, and to escape from the consequences, he fled to America, leaving his wife to do as she could. No doubt he did wrong here, but people in desperate circumstances cannot always reason. After he left, the shop was broken up, her husband's father took the two children, and for many months Nanny lived amongst her new friends. But she was in good health, and, had she bent her mind to her circumstances, as noble souls ever will, she might have found some honourable way of earning her bread. This she was too proud to do, however. Her friends, seeing this, one by one cast her off, and she was again left to fight her own battle.

She now removed to Bolton, and for some time was lost sight of. But it appears that her love of finery was still her ruling passion; for, on reading the papers, many of us were startled by seeing an account of her imprisonment for stealing a shawl and a pair of boots. The evidence against her was so conclusive, that she was sent to Liverpool, there to await her trial at the assizes.

Poor Nanny! how sad I was when I heard of thy dis-

grace, thy dreadful fall, and thy impending fate. I could have wept, and gone to speak a word of comfort to thee ; for well I remember how, in my boyish days, thou patted my young cheek, and gave me many a penny to take thy sealed letters to thy now self-banished husband. With my child's heart I loved thee, and thought thee a fine lady ; and when, in my innocence, I picked up the hot tongs that burned off thy lost curl, I felt a wish to put back thy lock of hair, if I could have done so. As my young heart wished for thee then, so do I wish for thee now, that thou hadst gone to some dear place of worship, some house of prayer, and, in meekness of spirit, bowed before thy God, and sought peace with Him through Jesus Christ. He would have saved thee, and guarded thee, and, instead of being immured in thy silent, gloomy prison cell, thou wouldst have been a happy child of God on earth, or a blessed saint in heaven.

The day of trial came : the heralds, lawyers, and jury came : and, with whatever indifference mere spectators may regard an assize-day, to those whose fate hangs on that day, and whose hearts almost die within them when the trumpet sounds to tell the judge is coming, it is a very different thing. I have witnessed many such scenes, but never without remembering that another and last trump will sound, and then the Judge will come to judge us all.

I have often thought of poor Nanny's condition on the day of her trial. It is pitiable enough to be imprisoned for crime, but it is sad, indeed, to be without one loving heart, or one single friend in the wide, wide world. To love, and to be loved, is true life. God is love, and the source of love ; and the more we love, and especially the more we love Him, the more we are like Him. The devil cannot love, and those who are most like the devil love the least.

When Nanny was brought from the cell to the dock, she held down her head in shame and sorrow. All eyes were fixed upon her ; and when the counsel for the crown laid before the judge and jury the crushing evidence of her crime, there was no reply ; she had no one to defend her, and the verdict against her was " Guilty !"

The judge lifted his head from a paper he was reading, and, in a voice of tenderness, said, " My young woman, have you any one in the court who can say anything in your favour ?" No answer.

Again he asked, " Have you no one present to speak one word for you ?" Nanny shook her head but gave no answer.

A third time he asked, looking round the court, if there was no person that knew her, that could say anything in her behalf ? Still no answer !

He paused for a moment, and then in slow, distinct words, said, " My young woman, the sentence against you is, that you be transported beyond the sea for seven years."

One wild, piercing shriek, which sent a thrill of pain through the entire court, and Nanny fell senseless in the arms of the jailor.

Soon after she returned to consciousness, one of the prison officials, with a large pair of scissors in his hand, came to cut her hair to the length allowed by prison rules. Crash ! crash ! went the shears through her yet long, beautiful tresses, and the poor creature was made to look like a felon indeed : but she did not resent it—she did not complain, or shed one tear, while her hair was being cut away. Deep sorrow had entered her soul—she was humbled to the dust—she was meek as as a little child. Did she now remember her aunt's prediction ?

A few weeks after, the transport ship came, and the trans-

port ship went. Many on board that ship had, like Nanny, darkened their future prospects by early follies and early crimes ; and, like her, were receiving the wages of sin, having inflicted on themselves and others unspeakable trouble. Oh ! how many breaking hearts have followed the wake of the transport ship ! How many sobbing or wailing partings, never to meet again ! Early and continued piety would prevent these dreadful scenes. If none but the true Christian—the really religious—were imprisoned, transported, or hanged, every transport ship would rot, every prison would tumble into ruins, and the drop and beam of every gallows moulder to dust, before they would have one single soul for a victim.

We know little of poor exiled Nanny after she had left her native land, only that she became very meek, obedient, and kind to every one, and that she made many friends on the passage out, and when she reached her destination. We also heard that she never smiled, but often read her Bible ; that her health failed her, and she gradually sunk into a comparatively early tomb. Her body now sleeps in a distant settlement and in a foreign grave ; but we trust that her bruised soul, renewed by Divine grace, is gone to where graves and penal settlements are unknown.

Poor Nanny ! thou art not the only one that a foolish love of extravagant finery has dragged down to infamy and irretrievable ruin : thousands, like thee, have had to wail, in after life, over character, friends, virtue, peace, and hope, all gone—gone, never to return in this world. And yet, this fearful whirlpool is still sucking down its thousands, who are bent on indulging in this destructive infatuation. Would that thy example might prevent some poor, erring creature,

from following in thy fatal wake ; then the object of this narrative will be answered.

Who communicated to Robert the intelligence of his wife's banishment we know not, but we know he returned from America some time after she was gone. He was greatly changed, and changed for the worse—malt was still doing its dreadful work. He was never heard to mention his wife, or to make the slightest allusion to her ; not even when madly raving under *delirium tremens*, as he often was. We also know that in one of these truly fearful conditions, with reeling reason and burning brain, he wandered wildly over a neighbouring moor, where he had often played in his happy, innocent childhood, and, in that fearful state of mind and body, he leaped into the deep, cold waters of the Lumb, near the valley of Cheesden.

I have this day, October 27th, 1865, stood on the bank from which, in his moment of madness, he plunged into the dark, deep waters, and this day talked with his near neighbour, Henry Howarth, who often tried to calm him in those hours of madness, and who, after the inquest, brought his dead body to the house from which he helped to carry it to its last resting-place, about thirty feet from the centre of the east window, in the grave of his grandmother, in Spotland Church-yard.

Poor Robert ! poor Nanny ! Silks and satins, mantles, wimples, crimping-pins, and malt, have done their gloomy work for you, as they have done for thousands : and never, while memory lasts, shall I forget the lesson taught me by her who is the principal subject of this narrative. The prophecy of her aunt has been bitterly fulfilled—that prophecy uttered on the day Nanny screamed over her lock of hair—her burned LOST CURL.

EMMOTT.

As you enter the town of Oldham, from the Mumps Railway Station, near the baths in Union-street, there is a small cottage numbered 60. For many years the windows of this cottage had been filled with cigars, tobacco, fruit, sweatmeats, sporting papers, and infidel publications ; but on the Sabbath the window was decked out with all possible attention, to allure and corrupt the young or old people in the neighbourhood.

Having a Sabbath engagement in Oldham, I informed the gentleman in whose house I was staying on the Saturday evening, that I should probably let myself out early in the morning to take a quiet walk through the streets, to have a little conversation with the stragglers and groups of street loungers, and try if I could induce some of them to get washed and attend a place of worship.

Passing down Union-street about seven the following morning, I came to this open toffy-shop. A middle-aged woman was on her knees washing the door-step. Wishing to speak to her, I stooped down and said,—

“ My good woman, have you any money in the Savings Bank ? ”

The woman rose from her knees, with the floor-cloth in her hand, and looking me in the face, said,—

“ Whatever made you ax me that, felley ? ”

"Well, Mrs.," I replied, "I have been asking that question of many Sunday shopkeepers for the last twenty years, and I have never found one that had saved anything; they are all a poor, poverty-stricken lot, and I am anxious to know if you are like the rest I have seen."

"Us aught saved? Nay, not us. I wish we had," she again replied.

Just then a tall, thin man came across the street, and, looking me rather fiercely in the face, said,—

"What are you saying to my wife?"

"Well, sir, if this be your wife, I have been asking her if you have any money in the bank?" I replied.

"Ah! you are one of the black coats, are you? Where is your white choker?" he asked.

"I do not happen to have one on at present, but I have a black coat of good Yorkshire cloth. Just rub your hand down the sleeve and see how smooth it is."

This playful expression on my part rather changed his temper, but again addressing me with an important air, he observed,—

"You have caught a tartar this morning, and one that has had many a twist with such chaps as you, for if their is aught I delight in, it is to choke a parson. I wish I could choke them every one, so that they could never speak again."

"What sort of a tartar are you?" I asked.

"My name is Emmott, a well-known Secularist of thirty years' standing."

"Then I am not surprised at your keeping a Sunday shop, and wanting to strangle parsons," I replied.

"Say what you will, I shall keep this little shop open when I like, and I have a good reason for keeping it open

on the Sunday, and I can clinch it with an argument you cannot touch."

"Well, what is your clincher?"

"Why, that I can make about two shillings out of the goods in that window to-day, and two shillings are two shillings. If I was to go to the Guardians for two shillings I might have to stand waiting two hours, and be snubbed in the bargain."

"Well, sir, I admire your spirit as regards going to the Guardians, for I have no patience with persons going for parish relief that can help it. Some are forced to go, but many go that might do without it, if they would only make an effort. But I think your argument a very lame one, for Sunday shopkeepers are far more likely to find their way to the poor-house, in the long run, than persons that honour the Sabbath."

"Why, how do you make that out?"

"Well, sir, here you have your fruit, toffy, and penny cigars, to say nothing about your infidel books, tempting Sunday-school scholars, and inducing them to do what their parents and teachers warn them against doing. You sell these cigars and tobacco to mere boys, helping them to form degrading habits, and thereby injuring your neighbours' children. The consequence will be, that respectable people will not trade with you any day, for, depend upon it, society is a social compact. Despise and snub society, and it will despise and snub you; respect and smile at it, and it will respect and smile at you. To make this more clear, did you ever see a six-foot looking-glass?"

"Yes, many a one."

"Well, the next time you see one, stand before it, clench your fist, and, with a look of defiance, say, 'Who cares for

you ? and you will see one with clenched fist and defiant look saying, ' Who cares for you ? ' But if you smile and say, ' Good morning, my friend, I wish you prosperity,' you will see one smiling in return, and wishing you prosperity. Now, sir, this is society, and what you measure to it you will have measured back. A man must, in this respect, reap what he sows."

During this conversation we had entered the house. He folded his arms, leaned against an old mangle, and seemed in a deep study, then looking at his wife, said,—

" Do you hear what this man says, lass ? I think there is some weight in it, for I have been snubbing and defying society for the last thirty years, and it has nearly snubbed us both into the workhouse. I think I will try smiling,—here goes,"—and Emmott swept toffy, tobabco, cigars, and infidel papers all out of the window, putting them on the top of the mangle, and pulled down his blind,—his wife staring at him with the greatest astonishment all the while.

While Emmott's wife was gazing at him in wonder, I was watching his proceedings with pleasure, and when he had finished, I said,—

" Well done ! and depend upon it you will be commercially a gainer. Now, if you keep a correct account of your dealings, I shall, all well, be coming this way again, and I dare venture to make up all you lose, if you will give me your gains ; and, now, what do you say to going to some place of worship ?"

" Nay, nay ! Your looking-glass argument has knocked me down, for I believe it ; but no churches or chapels for me. Oldham folks will be amazed enough to see the shop shut up, but they will never see me in a church. I see by the bills on the walls that John Ashworth, of Rochdale, is

going to preach in the chapel at the end of the street. I did think once of going to hear what that chap had to say. I have read his 'Wilkins,' 'Sanderson,' and 'Niff and his Dogs,' and long for a chance of just meeting that meddling fool."

"Well, sir, if you will get ready, I will call on you about the time, and we will go together."

"No, no! Chapels and churches are nought in my line—I wish they were all in ruins; besides, my Sunday jump is in the pop-shop, and I shall not go in these rags."

When I returned to the house at which I was staying, and, during breakfast, recounted to the gentleman and his wife the adventures of the morning—more especially my conversation with Emmott—they were greatly surprised and pleased. I expressed a wish that he might be visited by a few judicious friends, to encourage him in giving up his Sunday trading, and I thought it possible that he might yet be induced to attend some place of worship. This was done by Messrs. Mortimer, Hibbert, and others, for they all became interested in Emmott's case.

How mysterious are the ways of Him whose pathways are in the deep! with infinite love and pity He looks on our fallen humanity, and, though there is no other name by which we can be saved but the name of Jesus Christ, yet many and various influences are at work intended to bring wicked men to seek salvation in that name, and to trust in the goodness of God. Bruce, the traveller, when dying in despair on the arid sands of the Abyssinian desert, was led to trust in God's providence from seeing a small green plant blooming amidst the sands. Linnæus, the naturalist, fell on his knees before the common English gorse, and thanked God he had been spared to see this additional evidence of

His wisdom. I know a poor woman, who, almost broken-hearted with sorrow, sat weeping beside a well ; a little girl was plucking daisies and blue-bells, and singing, " Come to Jesus ;" the woman heard the child's song, knelt down and sought comfort from that Jesus of whom the child was singing, and from that day became a happy Christian.

The singing of a lark was amongst the influences that melted down the haughty spirit of Emmott. Soon after my visit he was walking through Oldham Park ; a lark was just rising from the ground ; he watched it as it rose higher and higher, warbling its sweet notes as it ascended, till it became a mere speck in the clear, blue sky. " Yes," Emmott said to himself, " yon little bird is filled with song and joy, while I am miserable and wretched. This winged creature, a mere thing of instinct, warbles and basks in the sunbeam, answering the purposes of its existence, and is happy ; but I, a rational creature, am gloomy, and sad of heart. How is this ? If there be a God, He must have as much regard for my happiness as for the happiness of that bird ? That bird sings its song without snubbing or insulting its fellows, or denying its Maker. It needs not to look into the six-foot glass to teach it that like must produce like."

These reflections brought tears, and Emmott caught himself offering up a prayer, that he too might answer the purpose of his existence, and become a happy man ; and, strange as it may seem, that prayer was the verse of a hymn taught him by his mother—a mother that had offered many prayers for her wayward son, but for thirty years he had never thought of it—but now that mother's verse—

" Come, Holy Spirit, from above,
Impart Thy gift of grace and love ;
Visit me with celestial fire,
And with Thyself my soul inspire."

became the involuntary language of a burdened soul laden with guilt.

The Sabbath following found Emmott in the house of prayer. Again and again he sought the sanctuary, and in tears of penitence besought Him whom he had denied and insulted to have mercy upon him, and pardon the most guilty of all guilty sinners. He was in this state of mind when he sent me the following letter :—

“ 60, UNION STREET, OLDHAM, OCT. 24, 1864.

“ KIND FRIEND,—

“ I little thought when you came to my door the other Sunday morning, that I should have so soon to plead for God’s mercy—me that had so often denied His existence—but such is the fact. O Mr. Ashworth ! that I could but undo the injury that my principles and conduct have done, I might have some hope of yet being happy. Had it not been that the Lord directed you to my house, I should have been lost. Will you pray for me, and if you can, soon come and see me ?

“ Yours very sincerely,

“ RICHD. EMMOTT.”

On my calling to see Emmott I was much surprised to find him so greatly changed. He requested me to remain with him as long as I possibly could, and take down in writing what he wanted to say. He then gave me the following sketch of his wayward life, which I give in his own words :

“ My earliest recollections are connected with Skipton-in-Craven. Then I went to the Sunday-school, but left when ten years of age. When about twenty, I lived in Bradford, and it was then I became an infidel, from reading Carlisle’s “ Destruction.” I joined the Chartists, bought a gun and

bayonet, but had to flee from the neighbourhood to escape imprisonment. I enlisted for a soldier, and had to stand guard over the jail containing three of our leaders—Frost, Williams, and Jones. This I did not like, and deserted. I travelled six hundred miles in women's clothes, but was caught, and I am now marked with the letter "D." I came to live in Manchester, and joined a company of low-lived infidels, and soon became so degraded, that my wife left me and came to Oldham. I followed her, and again found several of the same class, who call themselves "Secularists." About this time I was perfectly savage against every one professing religion, and took every opportunity of insulting them. I would not touch, or allow my child to touch the Bible, though I have flogged him because he would not tell a lie. I drove the Bible-sellers, out of the Market-place by turning all they said into ridicule, and laughed and mocked at all the open-air preachers I could find. Many of them, especially young, inexperienced men, I have driven away, by asking obscene questions they could not or durst not answer.

"I once pushed a donkey into a prayer-meeting, telling the astonished company that I had brought them a sinner to be converted, that had as much a soul as any of them.

"I was once sick, and, at my sister's request, a minister came to see me. He was taking out his Bible to read, but I told him to put away the cursed book, and find me two flannel shirts, which would do me more good than all the Bibles or prayers in the world. He replied that God could send blessings for the body as well as the soul; but I told him he was a liar, for God did not deal in flannel, if there was a God.

"I never heard a church bell but I wished the ground

would open and swallow up all the churches and chapels with the parsons, and I gloated in keeping open shop and selling sporting and infidel publications on the Sunday. Such has been my life for thirty years.

“I have been in many towns, and amongst all classes of infidels, especially the Secularists. Some of these pretend to be rather more respectable than the old class of infidels, but they are all a miserable, wretched lot—a withering blight follows aught they take in hand. They are an organization without a head, a body without a substance, denying the existence of a God, and are without faith in man. Rejecting the moral law, they laugh at all moral responsibility, and are only kept in order by the laws of the country. Most Secularists are better than their creed, for, did they practice what they pretend to believe, society would become impossible; and I believe with Gordon, one of their late lecturers, ‘That a Secularist, to gain his own point, can commit the most horrid crimes, even murder, and be consistent with his principles.’ It is a mercy that mankind holds their principles in abhorrence, and that such a race of beings are almost extinct.

“When my eyes were opened, and I saw how great a sinner I was, I felt greatly troubled about the injury I had done to others by the sale of infidel publications, those passports to ruin, and resolved that not one more should pass through my hands or remain in my house. I gathered them all together, with the books belonging to myself, costing in all about four pounds; I piled them on the fire, and, as I saw them consuming in the flames, I felt as if I was burning the devil, and watched their destruction with the greatest pleasure. Now, thought I, you are done for.

“Since this change came over my mind, my home is al-

ready like a paradise to what it was. Now, I have a quiet, peaceable home ; before it was like a bedlam, especially on the Sunday. Then it was filled with all sorts of rabble, talking all sorts of wicked, filthy talk, from morning to night. Never was there such a change in a house, and I hope God will have mercy upon me, and pardon my many transgressions, and then it will be a change indeed,—it will be bliss here and hereafter, and an immortality of bliss *is* bliss."

Emmott finished this short sketch of his life by requesting me to provide him with a Bible, that he might read it day and night. He also requested that I would couple our names with a date, so that he might be often reminded of the time and circumstances that had brought us together. I cheerfully complied with his request, and one true sign of the real change is, the book he once mortally hated he now loves. But is there not another sign of an amazing change ? No sooner does Emmott emerge from the gloomy cavern of infidelity and catch a ray of heavenly light, but he began to talk about an immortality of bliss !

The change that Emmott was so troubled and anxious about came at last. He had been very attentive at the means of grace on the Sabbath, and requested he might be allowed to attend a week-night meeting for Christian experience. From one of these meetings he returned in the deepest distress, and for four days sought mercy in prayers and tears. " O Lord, wilt Thou not pardon me ? If Thou wilt not, I cannot be surprised, for I have laughed thee to scorn, and thousands of times insulted the very name of Thy dear Son that died for me. I have indeed been the chief of sinners, but wilt Thou not save me ? O, do Lord, do ; for Christ's sake, that died for sinners, do save me !"

That heart-broken prayer was heard, and again the power of Christ's blood was made manifest in being able to save the chief of sinners, for Emmott became a child of God, a sinner saved by grace.

In a letter I received immediately after, in which he gives this prayer and his deliverance, he says :—"For a moment I felt as if I had left the earth, and that my spirit was soaring aloft into heaven. I felt my faith to be as strong as Samson. My wife says I am as happy as a king, but no king is half so happy. This is the brightest day of my life, and now I truly begin to live for I am a child of God, bought with the blood of the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. I hope I shall walk humbly before Him, and daily ask His blessing and grace to guide me, and help me to live at peace with all mankind."

Emmott's conversion produced great astonishment amongst all who knew him in Oldham. That the sneering, mocking, scorning, scoffing, Sunday shop-keeping, infidel book-selling, thirty-year Secularist should become a Christian, astonished all, and greatly pleased many, but it was like a bombshell thrown among his old companions in infidelity. Many of these called to see if what they had heard was true, and found it true indeed. But when it was reported that Emmott was expected to give a public confession of his conversion at the church he attended, many went who are not often found in a place of worship.

This service, Mr. Mortimer, the minister, opened with singing, prayer, and a short address. Several of the members spoke a few words, but when Emmott rose, with evident nervousness, all eyes were turned towards him, with the most intense interest, and in breathless silence. His first words were feeble and tremulous. He spoke of the amazing

goodness of God in preserving his life during the many years of his wicked career, and mourned over his many transgressions, and the evil he had done to others. He alluded to the mysterious way he had been brought to see his wickedness and folly, but when he spoke of the love of God, through Christ, in pardoning his sins, he wept like a child. He concluded by declaring that he had enjoyed more real happiness in one hour since his conversion, than in all the time he was an infidel.

Many that were present were much affected, and wept tears of thankfulness for this additional evidence of the power of saving grace. One poor man, an old acquaintance of Emmott's, declared that, "if he could be as happy as Dick Emmott, he would give all he had, even his donkey and cart."

My visit to Emmott after the public confession of his faith was to both of us a joyful meeting. He spoke of his deep confidence in God's mercy and love, and his firm conviction that He would sustain him amidst all the persecution and abuse he would probably have to suffer from his old companions. I then took up the Bible, and, opening at the fifty-third of Isaiah, read,—

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

While reading this description of our Saviour's suffering for us, tears streamed down Emmott's face. "What love !

what love !" he exclaimed, "and all for guilty sinners—for such as me. O, what love !"

Emmott's prayer at parting was the simple, earnest breathing of a thankful heart.

"O Lord," said he, "how good Thou art ! Never, never can I praise Thee enough for what Thou hast done for me. What a wicked, wicked man I have been, yet Thou, for Jesus Christ's sake, hast forgiven me. I know, I feel Thou hast. Christ did carry my griefs and sorrows ; He was bruised for me, and by His stripes I am healed. Do help me to praise Thee ! O do help me to praise Thee ! and bless all my old companions. Open their dark eyes, and show them the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. Do, Lord, do, for my dear Saviour's sake. Amen."

On parting, with a face beaming with joy, he said, "Do you know I am now admitted a member of the Church ? Yes, I am ; and now, living or dying, I have the unspeakable honour and pleasure of being a member of a Christian church. Happy day ! happy day ! who could have thought it ?"

Yes, Emmott, who could have thought it ? Let none despair, seeing that faith in Jesus can snatch from the very verge of hell, such a vile transgressor as the Oldham infidel—
—RICHARD EMMOTT.

THE WIDOW.

THERE is no doubt but that many women would be a vast deal better without husbands, than to have such wicked, miserable creatures as they are plagued with ; and there is no doubt that many children would be great gainers by becoming fatherless, for they have fathers who are more to them a curse than a blessing. When I have witnessed the misery of some homes, and knew that it was caused by the conduct of those who ought to make these homes happy, I have thought that the best use we could make of some of our old coal-pits, would be to fill them with these torments, providing they had no souls, for they do not deserve either a coffin or a respectable grave. But this would not be Christianity. In this world we shall all have something to exercise our charity and patience ; and we are bound to do all we can to be a blessing to those who may be a curse to themselves. Instead of filling up old coal-pits with them, we must try to lead them to Him who died for the vilest of sinners.

But it is also true that many widows, like the widow mentioned in this narrative, are "widows indeed ;" left like the sparrow on the house-top, alone ; bereaved of their stay and staff, forced to struggle with bitter adversity, and often to weep alone over their hapless condition. And it is a comfort to know that heaven has marked out the widow for its special care.

One of the noble replies given by Job to his "miserable comforters," when they charged him with having sent the widows empty away, was, that he had not turned a deaf ear to their cry, but had caused their "hearts to sing for joy." And one of the most touching scenes in the life of Peter, is when he stands looking at the dead body of Dorcas, and the weeping widows gather round to show him the garments she had made for them. One of the imperative orders given by the Almighty to the ancient Jews was, "Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry." And one of the standing tests of true religion before God is, that we "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

There is a pleasing sketch, from the German, of a boy who saw his mother weeping, and, affectionately putting his arms round her neck, said, "Why do you weep, mother?" His mother replied,—

"I did not know you saw my tears, my child. I have often wept in secret, for I did not want to make you sad by letting you see my sorrow ; but since your father was taken away, I have found it hard work to provide you bread and pay your school fee. I intended to give you more learning before you began work, but I find I cannot ; you will have to leave school, and help me to get food for yourself and two little sisters. I have got you the situation of an errand boy, and you will have three shillings per week."

"Well, don't weep, mother ; I will be a good lad, and help you all I can," was the noble reply.

The first day the little fellow went to his work, he was sent with letters to the post-office. He put them in one by one. The post-master stood at the door, and the lad very

innocently said, "Where do all the letters that people put in your box go to?"

The post-master kindly explained to him, that if he wrote a letter, folded it up, sealed it, and wrote on the back the name and residence of the person he wished to receive it, it would go to him wherever he lived.

That night the fatherless boy wrote the following letter :

"TO MY LORD JESUS CHRIST IN HEAVEN,—

"My father is dead, and my mother weeps, and is sad because father is dead, and we are very poor. Mother wished to keep me to school a little longer, but she has no money ; do help poor mother that she will not weep."

Having finished the letter, he folded it up, sealed it with some shoemaker's wax, wrote on the back : "To my Lord Jesus Christ in Heaven," and put it into the post-office.

When the post-master saw the letter he could not tell what to do with it, and was holding it in his hand when a Moravian minister entered. He showed the minister the letter, observing,—

"It is no use sending this to the dead letter-office ; I will open it and return it to the simple person that has posted it, if I can find him out."

The letter was opened and read. The post-master and minister were much affected. The minister begged permission to read the letter at a Missionary Meeting he was going to attend that evening. He read it to a large audience, and a lady rose, exclaiming :—

"O ! that I knew the little boy that wrote that letter ; he should go to school, and his mother and sisters should have bread."

The mother and child were both present. The mother held down her head in amazement and fear, for it was all new to her ; but the little fellow, all excitement, called out,

“ Please, Ma’am, I am here !”

The good lady fulfilled her promise. The boy was sent to school again, and the widow found a friend in need.

Now, I ask, did not the contents of that letter go to heaven before the little boy posted it ? I believe they did ; for God has given special promises to the orphan and widow. This little story is one illustration of the way in which He keeps these promises,—the following narrative is another.

In my seventh Report of the “ Chapel for the Destitute,” in the month of June, I mention having given relief to a widow. During the last winter I received a letter, asking if I should be at home the following evening, and stating that the writer was in trouble, and wished to see me on a very urgent matter. I replied that, having a published engagement in Stephenson-street Chapel, Manchester, I should not be at home, but might be seen on the day following.

I had forgot the stranger’s letter until, arriving at Stephenson-street, the chapel-keeper informed me that a lady was in the vestry, anxious to have an interview with me. On entering the vestry she rose, but was so agitated that I requested her to be seated, and to inform me, in as few words as possible, the nature of her errand, as the audience would soon be waiting. She tried to tell me, but was so fluttered and nervous that she could not proceed, for she evidently feared to mention the real object of her errand. My time having expired, I asked for her address, and promised to call as soon as possible.

On calling, according to promise, I found that the timid

young woman I had seen on the previous evening, was the only child of an aged, respectable, and good-looking widow, keeping a small shop in Rochdale Road, Manchester. I was invited into the sitting-room. The daughter entered with me ; but both were so greatly embarrassed, that it was several minutes before the mother could inform me of their real object in wishing to see me. At length she said :

“ Well, sir, I think I ought to apologise for giving you this trouble ; and though you have kindly fulfilled your promise in coming, I scarcely know how to begin. But if you will let me give you a little of my history you will then better understand the request I have to make. Are you pressed for time ? How long can you stay with us, sir ? ”

I looked at my watch, and replied, “ About an hour and a-half.”

“ Well, sir, I do not know what your first impressions about us are, but I have seen better days. I am of a good family, but my relations are all dead. I married a well-educated, gentlemanly man, a commercial traveller, representing what was thought to be a wealthy house. But the house failed, and for several months my husband was out of a situation. This took away most of our savings. He, however, got another place, and, when setting out on his first journey for the new house, he came to my bedside,—for I was then confined. Oh ! how well I remember that morning. He had his overcoat and travelling rug on his arm ; he looked cheerful, and affectionately bade me good morning. But in a few hours he was brought back—dead ! He had just stepped on the steam packet, the boiler burst, and my dear Alfred was hurried into eternity ! ”

A fresh remembrance of the awfully sudden death of her husband brought a flood of tears to the eyes of the poor

widow. She turned aside her head to hide them. For a moment we sat in silence. Thinking to direct the thoughts of the poor woman to what is of infinitely more importance than the death of the body, and having an impression that, in her case, joy would be mixed with grief, I observed,—

“I do not think it is wrong to mourn over our departed loved ones. If we do not sorrow as those who have no hope, we have a bright spot in the cloud.”

“Yes, sir, it is that which gives me the deepest pang, and makes my keenest sorrow. My Alfred was a scholar and a gentleman, but he was not a Christian. And believing as I do, that as death leaves us, judgment will find us,—for our Saviour plainly tells us we must be born again, or we cannot see the kingdom of God,—believing this, and my dear husband being cut off as he was,—almost killed me. For many, many days I refused to be comforted, for I feared that to him it was a double death. I had no bright spot in the cloud.

“But, once or twice, a little hope hovered over my mind. I then began to pray that the Lord would let the soul of my Alfred come back, to tell me if he was happy. For this I prayed incessantly. I refused to let my room be lighted in the night, expecting and believing he would be allowed to come back, and tell me he was saved. Every evening I tried to prepare my mind for the meeting, for I truly believed he was coming. And, at last, come he did ! perhaps not really and truly, but to me it was really and truly,—call it a dream or what you will. He was dressed just as he was on the morning he came to my bedside to take leave of me, his overcoat and travelling rug on his arm. He looked me in the face with a look of sorrow, and said, ‘Sophia, you should not have done this. Why disturb me, why not submit to

your fate ! Your prayers and tears are of no avail for me now.'

"With the same look of sorrow, but in a lower and sadder voice, he replied, 'You know how I resisted the strivings of God's Spirit. I might have been saved. I have had ten thousand offers of mercy, and rejected them all. Farewell.'"

Here the mother paused, and for several minutes we again sat in silence ; then, turning to me, she said,—

"Mr. Ashworth, do you know of any book that has been written with the object of giving comfort to those who are convinced they have dear relatives or friends in perdition ?"

"No, I don't think such a book could be written. The Judge of all the earth will do right, and to believe that He will, is the only ground on which a smitten soul can find any repose. To believe that God is infinitely holy and true, and righteous in His dealings with us, is the only thing that can teach such mourners as you to say 'Amen' to His mysterious doings."

"Yes, sir, I think you are right. Nevertheless it is very sad. I have often had a wish that I might be allowed to take my husband's place in hell, if he be there, providing his dear soul might go to heaven, for I could always better suffer myself than see the sufferings of those I love."

"I don't think you are alone in that feeling," I replied ; "but what did you do for bread after your husband's death ?"

"Well, sir, a very infirm relative, who was both able and willing to pay for being carefully nursed, hearing of my desolate condition, came to reside with me, and for several years I was able to keep on my house ; but the relative dying, I not being able to get another lodger, sold part of my furniture, and with the proceeds opened a small shop. For many years I worked hard, night and day, for a bare subsistence.

Yet, careful as I was, I got a little in debt. To pay this off I sold more furniture, and my husband's gold watch. About this time the shop I occupied was sold, and my new landlord raised my rent so high that I could not possibly pay it. I removed to Rochdale Road, and again was nearly making bread, when the cotton famine almost destroyed my custom, and every month I found we were going down.

"Had my daughter's health been good, so that she could have learned some suitable business, perhaps we might have done better, but from a child she has been very delicate. A slight cold will confine her to bed for weeks; and the knowledge of her weak state, and our continual struggling to make ends meet, often makes her very dejected. We never have any of what are called luxuries. We live very cheaply and very bare, and perhaps this makes against the health of my child; but we must do so.

"And now, sir, I come to the part we wished to see you about. During the last seven years we have lost ground by little and little, until I now owe two tradesmen more than I can pay. To some, what I owe would seem a mere trifle, but to me it is a great sum. About six months since, I promised to pay them all on or before the 21st of June next, and have done all I can to fulfil my promise. The time is near at hand, and I shall not be able to keep my word. This greatly distresses me and my daughter. We have wept much and prayed much over the matter, for we believe in the goodness and providence of God, and trust we are both His spiritual children. If we are unable to keep on the shop, and our goods be taken, what shall we do? For humanly speaking, we have not one relative or friend in this wide world to whom we could look for help.

"A few weeks since, I was reading your book, 'Strange

Tales from Humble Life,' and especially that narrative called 'Twenty Pounds; or, The Little Prayer.' While reading, I was astonished to find such a clear description of our own condition. After reading it, I said to my daughter,— 'If there be help for us in this world, I have an impression it will come through the writer of this book.' We talked much about you, and earnestly sought for divine guidance, and the result is the letter we sent you. I feel ashamed, and again make an apology for troubling you."

Having now become acquainted with the bereavements, trials and struggles of the two truly respectable and, I thought, pious creatures, that sat in silence, waiting my answer, I found it was my turn to become thoughtful. Eighteen pounds would pay all, and establish their credit with their tradesmen. The cotton famine was nearly over, and this sum might save two deserving creatures from misery and ruin. What shall I do? Yes, what shall I do? I have no eighteen pounds to spare. I have, every year, hundreds of cases of distress, but I relieve them with very small sums, and this sum would relieve many such cases. These were my thoughts, and, not knowing what to do and fearing to crush all their hope, I at last said,—

"Well, you must excuse me giving you no answer at present. I have a few wealthy friends, who might, if they knew of your case, give me something to help you. One of them has a long knitted purse, one end of which, he says, specially belongs to the Lord, for he gives by rule, and gives much. Sometimes he tells me the Lord's end is getting rather full, and asks me if I have any real cases of need. I will see this good man, and ask him how his purse is, and let you know early."

With this promise they both seemed greatly satisfied,

saying, that whoever found the money, they would gladly return it when able.

I saw my friend with the two-ended purse, but was sorry to find both ends were just then empty ; but I was sure he had his own good reason for having given his all, for he gave much, and much comes to him to give.

I wrote to say that the purse was empty, but lest they should despair, promised to call and see them again.

On Sunday, the 18th of June, I had an engagement at York-street Chapel, Heywood. The day was very hot. Passing the house of one of my friends, residing betwixt Rochdale and Heywood, I called requesting they would allow me to bathe my hands and face in cold water. I was shown upstairs into the bath-room. When I came down, the lady of the house said,

“ Mr. Ashworth, I have just been reading to my husband your narrative of ‘ Twenty pounds ; or, The Little Prayer,’ and he thinks it was a very timely deliverance for old Mr. Gadsby, and so think I.”

That moment a very strange sensation came over me, for I felt God was at work for the fatherless and widow.

“ Indeed,” I replied, “ I have a little tale to tell you about another person that has been reading that narrative ;” and at once I told them all about the poor suffering creatures in Rochdale Road. They both heard me with the greatest interest, and one of them said,

“ But surely you are not going to find them the money, are you ?”

“ I don’t know that,” I replied. “ My Bible says, ‘ Blessed is he that considereth the poor, for the Lord will remember him in the time of trouble.’ If I live, I, no doubt

shall have trouble. Yet it will be a great consolation to feel and know that the Lord will not forget me then."

For a moment both of them looked very thoughtful ; and my time having expired, I shook hands and left them.

On the morning of the 20th of June, I awoke much earlier than usual, for I had been much troubled in my sleep by, as distinctly as a dream can be distinct, seeing mother and daughter in greater trouble than ever. I at once saw I must immediately decide what to do, and I did determine to advance the eight pounds for one of the creditors, and see the other, and request him to wait another six months, and I would see that he did not lose his money. This I determined to do that day.

On opening my letters, on the morning I was going to see the distressed widow, one of them was from the house I had called at on the Sunday, and read as follows :—

" DEAR SIR,

"After you left on Sunday, we could not help thinking of the two poor creatures you mentioned. It would be a very sad thing for them to be turned out of their living, and I write to say, we will furnish you with ten pounds. Will you be so kind as to convey it to them ? The Lord bless you.

" Yours truly,

" _____."

On reading this letter, I thought,—Yes, God lives ! He lives ! He lives, and is a Father to the fatherless. A Judge to the widow is God in His holy habitation. Leave thy fatherless children and I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me. Yes, He lives, and blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust.

Some may say this was a singular chance or accident ; a case of remarkable good luck. [I indeed, people that believe in luck, chance, and accident, are very inconsistent if they pray.] Such persons heed not, or believe not in an all-seeing, wise, and superintending Providence. A sparrow falls not to the ground without God's notice, and He tells His children that the very hairs of their head are all numbered, and urges them to call on Him in the day of trouble, and He will deliver them. The doctrine of luck is the doctrine of the fatalist.

That day, on entering the little shop in Rochdale Road, the daughter was standing behind the counter, and seemed unusually calm ; and I had an impression some one had been with help before me.

"You seem more cheerful to-day ; have you got out of your difficulty?" I asked.

"No, sir," was her reply. "I always feel happy when I see mother so. She is very much lifted up with more than a conviction that we are to have help to day." Then, with tears in her eyes, she said,—

"I never saw my mother so earnest in prayer, and so long on her knees as she was last night. On rising she smiled at me as I lay in bed, saying, 'Oh ! how happy I feel ! the Lord has really heard my prayer, and we shall see it very soon.'"

When the mother came into the shop, I laid the money down. She looked first at the money, then at her daughter, then at me ; then folding her hands, she calmly said, "The Lord did not turn a deaf ear to the cry of the widow."

I left the little shop of the poor but now exceedingly happy mother and daughter, thankful that my Lord had honoured me by making me the medium through which He

had sent help to His needy children, and wishing that the rich in this world's goods did but know how much real pleasure they forego by not honouring the Lord with their substance. Many of them I know often feel the joys of doing good; to do good is a real joy. These have the blessing of Him who has said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." And they will also have the blessing and the prayer of many a suffering one, many an orphan, and many a WIDOW.



SARAH ; OR, "I WILL HAVE HIM."

AN old Christian minister once called at my house, on returning from a visit to a member of his church. On sitting down, he for some time remained silent, gazing in the fire, then, lifting up his head, and looking me in the face, he said,—

"Oh dear! oh dear! whatever must be done for the young women of our churches and schools, to prevent them making such miserable, wretched, ruinous marriages? I have just been to see one of our most promising young members, to inquire the reason of her long absence from the meeting, but I could get nothing from her but sobs and tears. Her mother, coming in at the time, informed me that the young man her daughter had married was very unsteady, and threatened to turn her out of doors if she attended chapel any more. 'But,' continued her mother, '*she said she would have him.*' Oh! that our young women were more cautious. What must be done for them? Can you tell?"

"Yes, I think I can," I replied. "The church and school must labour more earnestly to train up a better generation of young men for husbands; for husbands our young women *will* have, either good or bad."

The old minister, with a quiet smile, rose from his chair, put on his hat, took his crutch, and bade me good morning,

but with a look that plainly told me he was sad at heart ; for he was a good man, and mourned over this one stray sheep of his fold.

And what minister or Sunday-school teacher, that has been long in the work, and who has cared for the future of our young females, has not often had to pass through the same painful experience ? I have had many a foolish wish in my time, but I think one of the most foolish was one Sunday, when speaking to about two thousand young men and women, I then felt a desire to see what would be their ultimate destiny. I believed, and told them, that the joys and sorrows of this world and the next greatly depended on the characters they were then forming, and the company they were keeping, especially in relation to marriage. Oh ! what havoc being unequally yoked has made,—what wretched homes,—what blighted hopes,—what broken hearts,—what early graves !

The case of the young wife mentioned by the old minister I knew something of at the time, and have seen many more such cases since ; and thinking one of them may serve to check others who are near the same brink of ruin, I give it to warn my young female friends to be wise in time.

I distinctly remember that, about ten o'clock one Sunday morning, I was standing at the desk in one of our schools, looking with pleasure on the teachers and scholars as they all seemed cheerfully engaged in their various places. A fellow-teacher who was also looking on the pleasing scene, smilingly observed, —

"How happy they look, especially the young women in the Bible class. I wish they may never be less joyous than they are just now."

Sarah, the subject of this narrative, was one of the happy

ones who sat amongst the Bible scholars that morning, and, I believe, loved the school with an affection as deep as any then present. She could read and sing well, had a cheerful, open countenance, and being full of life and spirit, contributed to the pleasures of those around her. But she had one failing, the consequence of which she did not then see,—she was fond of Sunday evening walks, and sometimes these walks were not in the best company. It was in one of these Sunday evening walks that she met with the young man who afterwards became her husband; and, as good Christian young men are not found lounging or strolling through streets, lanes, or fields on the Sabbath, we may fairly conclude that Sarah was now in great danger; for, of all the important periods of a young woman's life, there are none more momentous than those hours when she first listens to the soft declarations of a young man. Oh! how much of weal or woe depends on that moment! Yet by thousands of young women that moment is never seriously considered.

Stephen, the young man who had confessed his love to Sarah, was a bold, swaggering fellow, who boasted he could go to church, say "amen," dance a jig, swear an oath, and drink a glass of ale. He worked at the mill, got tolerable wages, and was of a poor but respectable family. In choosing a wife, he did not consider it necessary to consult either his own parents or the parents of his intended; and Sarah, in this respect, was too much like him. Forgetting, or deceiving the guide of her youth, she kept it a secret from those that loved her most, and would probably have guided her best. In this respect they both dishonoured their parents, and God's blessing never yet rested on such, and never will.

The consequence was, that when Stephen went to visit Sarah, he went late, or in the dark, and whistled once, twice, or three times, as had been agreed upon. She then made some excuse for going out, and walked with him in bye-ways, sly-ways, and dark-ways, forgetting that no young man, worth a straw, ever thought better of any young woman for so far losing her self-respect as to walk with him in sly-ways. To both of them it is low and degrading, and to one of them it often proves worse than death.

When it became known that Sarah was keeping company with Stephen, many of the more serious scholars, and several of her fellow-teachers (for she had now become a teacher) warned her of the consequences. They told her he had often been seen drunk, and that he attended no place of worship; and the dear old creature who had been, if possible, more than a mother, besought her to give him up, and be warned in time. One evening, when they were more earnestly urging this upon her, she replied,—

"When we get married I think he will mend; but, say what you will, and do what you will, *I will have him!*"

After this her friends gave up the struggle, and ceased to speak to her on the subject. She was left to take her own course, and in a few months after she was married. In a short time after, her new husband came home one evening, to use his own expression, "As drunk as a lord."

That was a bitter evening to Sarah. She wept most of the night, and the following day, when he was sober, she besought him never to enter a public-house again. But he doggedly replied,—

"I like a pint of ale, and I shall have one when I think proper, and shall not be talked to by anybody. You knew

it before you had me. You made the bargain with your eyes wide open."

Whether Sarah's eyes were opened before her marriage to Stephen admits of some doubt, but now they were being opened with a vengeance. She became very dejected, and wished to tell her troubles to her former friends, but durst not, knowing they had done all they could to prevent the very thing now come to pass. For fifteen years she had been in connection with the school and church, and, being a member, she had attended many prayer-meetings, and once or twice had engaged in prayer; but from the time she began to keep company with Stephen, her conscience had been ill at ease, she had neglected to pray, and absented herself from the means of grace when she could have attended. But now her burdened soul had nowhere else to go but to Him whose guidance she had failed to ask, and who would have directed her steps, had she asked in time.

Stephen grew worse and worse. Saturday and Sunday nights were spent in the public-house. Stronger and stronger became his desire for drink. He neglected his work, got discharged, and, to hide their disgrace and shame, they left that neighbourhood, and came to reside in Rochdale. But he did not leave behind him his drunken habits, and the result was, that husband and wife, and their two small children, were all clothed in rags. Indeed, so reduced were they that Sarah pawned her last remaining property, her precious Bible, for sixpence, to buy her children bread!

It was about this time she came to my office. Her eyes were red with weeping, and, in great earnestness, she besought me to try to find her husband employment, and do what I could to induce him to give up drinking. She persuaded him to come and see me, and he then promised he

would reform his life, keep to work, and be better to his family. For several weeks he kept to his promise, and came with his wife every Sunday to the Chapel for the Destitute. Sarah, poor thing, was quite overjoyed at the change. She became better dressed, and smiles were again lighting up her sorrow-smitten countenance. From a child she had been a good singer, and often her clear, full voice,—while chanting sweet melodies, dear to her in her earlier, happier days,—rose in fine tones above the whole of our congregation. She sang,—and wept for joy as she sang,—the sweet songs of praise to Him who seemed again nearer and dearer to her now lightened and comparatively happy soul.

Oh! ye young, happy wives,—whose sober, loving husbands sing, and sit, and kneel with you in the blessed house of prayer,—whose mingled devotions ascend from peaceful hearts to fill with incense those golden vials before the heavenly throne—oh! breathe a prayer for such as Sarah, whose soul is filled with joy, because she shares with you one short month of wedded happiness.

The gathering cloud was again casting its dark shadow over Sarah's path. She had rejoiced with trembling, knowing how weak are the best resolves of the prayerless,—for Stephen was a prayerless man. One morning, when going to his work, he met two of his old pot companions, who jeered him about going to chapel. Stephen was like thousands such weak men, he could better stand a blow in the face, or a thump in the ribs, than the finger of scorn. Gibes and sneers were stronger than his love for his wife, his children, his God, or his soul. He winced, and shamed, and, to show that he was a man, went with them into a public-house.

That day I received the following letter,—

"SIR,—Will you send me three shillings by the man that brings this note? My husband is so ill I cannot leave him. Do send me three shillings.

"Yours,

"SARAH."

I read the note, and, looking at the man that brought it, said,—

"Well, old Fox, you have planned this well; but if Stephen and you had what many better have had, you would have a rope tied round both your necks, and be hanged up, back to back."

The idle drunkard sneaked out of my office as fast as possible. He was one of the two men who had that morning sneered at and entrapped foolish Stephen. I knew the man, and had often tried to do him good. He had attended the Chapel for the Destitute several times, and promised fair for becoming a changed character; but one Sunday morning I found him helplessly drunk, under the windows of an empty house. The water from the drop-spout was pouring over him, and he looked like a drowned dog. I pulled him from under the water-spout, and gave him a good shake. He opened his eyes, stared me in the face, and, seeing who it was, said,—

"Is that you, Mr. Ashworth? Ah man! you tried to convert me, but could not. I am above your cut; yes, I am above your cut."

I felt distressed that the man should think I had power to convert. None can do that but God.

About two hours after the man had called with the note I met Sarah. I had the note in my pocket, and showed it to her. I shall not soon forget her look of agony: I expected every moment she would fall to the ground. Her

anguish was such that she could not speak,—she put both hands to her breast, to hold her throbbing heart. Pale as death, and without saying a word, she turned back, and went to seek her miserable husband, who, she fondly thought, was comfortably at work. Poor creature! what a picture of misery and despair.

Stephen was degraded enough before this last fall, but after this he became more and more debased. Drunkenness and idleness often go together, and Stephen's conduct became so bad, that no one, who knew him, would employ him. He began to associate with the worst rabble in the town, and lost all regard for his sorrowing wife and two helpless children. Sarah got a little charring and washing, when she could, but she, too, sank lower and lower every day. The little furniture they had was sold for debts, and they were compelled to take shelter in a very poor lodging-house. Her friends helped her a little, when they could do it unknown to her husband, and had she been a widow, she would have been much better assisted; for those that wish to help a drunkard's wife fear to do so, and the poor creature is worse than a widow. A drunkard's wife is doubly cursed.

On going to my office one morning I found Sarah standing in the passage, waiting to see me. She tried hard to tell me her errand without weeping, but her pet-up feelings burst forth in a flood of tears. After being thus relieved, she said,—

"I have come to tell you that Stephen is a little steadier just now, and he says he will try to do something to get a little bread for us. He knows that no one will employ him, but he thinks that if he could get a barrow and go out hawking, he could make a little money."

"What does he think of hawking?" I asked.

"Cockles and mussels," she replied.

"How will he get them?"

"Well, sir, I have come to ask you to lend me six shillings to buy them with. I will pay you back at the rate of sixpence per week."

"But you know, Sarah, that if Stephen gets any money he will drink it, and then how can you get a fresh stock of cockles and mussels?"

A few evenings after Sarah had been in my office, I was coming through a village, outside the town, and heard Stephen crying, "Cockles and mussels, alive O!" and saw Sarah walking by the barrow to draw the money. I crossed the street lest she should see me, for I wished to spare her feelings, but could not help thinking of the time when I saw her in the Sunday-school, a well-dressed, happy, cheerful young woman, and contrasting it with her present condition. Then full of hope and promise—now a poor, ragged, sorrow-smitten creature, shivering in the streets, with her drunken, idle husband, shouting "Cockles and mussels!" And I also remembered that she said, when warned by her friends, "*I will have him!*"

Oh! I wish our young women would take warning from the many sad examples. to be seen every day, of the untold misery arising from thoughtless marriages. What a blessing it would be if every young woman would ask herself the following questions when a young man first speaks to her: Is he good to his parents? Does he swear? Does he go into a public-house? What sort of company does he keep? Does he regularly attend a place of worship? Depend upon it, if he be not good to his parents, if he takes God's name in vain, goes into public-houses, keeps bad or doubtful

company, and attends no place of worship, the woman will be a fool that expects to be anything but miserable with such a man. Nor is it surprising if such, like Sarah, should have to cry "Cockles and mussels!"

The little improvement that had taken place in Stephen enabled them to get a poor second-hand bed and an old table, and with these they removed into a cellar. The elder boy was getting two shillings and sixpence per week, but the younger was running ragged and wild about the streets; for Stephen, like many drunken parents, would not deprive himself of one pint of beer to get his child to school. Seeing the little miserable boy in the streets, and knowing that, like thousands such, the fault was not his own, I gave him a note to the teacher of Sparrow-hill School, promising that if he would take the boy I would pay his school fee. The little fellow took the note, was admitted, and, a few days after, he gave me such a smile as well paid me for all I had done for him. A smile from a drunkard's child is worth something.

Sarah's health failing her a little, she was unable to go out with Stephen, and the consequence was what she expected,—he drank the money with which he ought to have purchased a fresh stock, and became worse than ever; for, like many drunkards, though he brought nothing home, he abused his wife if she did not find him sufficient food.

One Saturday evening Sarah came to my house. On going to the door to ask her errand, I found she had brought with her their eldest child, a boy about eleven years of age. She told me he had only part of one shirt, and that she had to wash it after he had gone to bed. I promised the little fellow a shirt, for I well remembered how I myself had many times gone to bed on the Saturday evening while my poor

mother washed and mended mine. I noticed, while Sarah was speaking to me, that she covered one side of her face with her apron, but though she tried to hide it, I saw that one of her eyes was very much swollen and quite black.

“What is the matter with your face, Sarah? How is it your eye is so black?” I enquired.

Sarah began weeping, which soon caused the little fellow to weep also. She told me that her husband had been doing a little work, for which he was to have four shillings; that she had gone to the person he was working for to borrow two shillings, to get a little bread for herself and children; and that when Stephen found he had only two shillings for drink, he came home and almost killed her.

Several months after this, late one evening, after she had put the two boys to bed, and got as good a supper as she could for her husband, she sat on the bed-side, the only seat in the house, and was reading a Bible she had borrowed from a neighbour. The moment Stephen came in, he looked at his supper, and, fixing his eyes on her, growled out, “Is that all?”—then with a deep oath he swore he would chop her head off. He then kicked the table over, rolled into bed beside his trembling children, without taking off his dirty clothes, and soon fell fast asleep!

His terrible look, and more terrible threat, so greatly frightened Sarah that she durst scarcely remain in the house. All night she sat in the corner in great fear. She durst not fall asleep, or make the least noise, and if he moved she trembled from head to foot. Oh! how she prayed that God would not forsake her, but help and protect her in this dreadful hour!

The fearful mental sufferings of that dreadful night had such an effect upon Sarah that she lost all spirit, for she daily expected her husband would murder her. So com-

pletely was she crushed by continual bad treatment and suffering, that one evening, or rather about two in the morning, she leaped from her miserable bed, tore off her ragged night-cap, opened the door, and, with nothing on but her night-dress, ran down the Foundry Brow, her hair flying loose as she ran, till she came to the end of Water-street. She then stood still, and, looking up at the bright, full moon, she lifted up her right hand, and in a clear, full voice sang—yes, the poor, stricken creature *sang*,—and she sung one of those sweet hymns she had often sung when happy in the Sabbath-school. That sweet hymn was,—

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I'll bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.

* * * * *

There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble ro'l
Across my peaceful breast."

She sung only the first and last verses, but how fully the words expressed her condition !

The wild, warbling tones of a female voice, in the dead of night, woke many of the surrounding sleepers, who, filled with wonder, opened their windows, and looked out on the strange, astonishing scene. The police stood in amazement, but one of them took her by the hand, and, knowing where she lived, kindly took her home. She went with him, quiet as a child. Sarah, poor Sarah ! had lost her reason. A cruel, idle, drunken husband had driven her mad.

But she said to her kind friends, who warned her in time, "Say what you will, and do what you will, I WILL HAVE HIM !"

MY SICK FRIENDS.

IF there is, in this wide, wide world, one spot more calculated than another to roll back turbulent emotions, tame ambitious aspirations, and bring down lofty pretensions, it is the bed of long, lingering, protracted sickness. There the true value of things is tested, and the discovery made of what only can be trusted. The gilding and the tinsel fade away before the real and the substantial ; for there we view objects through a sober medium. And if there be a place, under heaven, from which can be gathered evidence the most convincing, and testimony the most enduring, of what saving faith can do, it is those same secluded, and often obscure chambers, where wearisome days and nights are appointed, for weeks, months, and years.

Oh, it is easy in life's tranquil day,
When all around is peace, to kneel and say,
" Father, Thy will be done ! " But when that Will
Calls us to suffer, and be patient still,—
When God's mysterious ways are yet unknown ;
When clouds and darkness veil His awful throne,
How then we need His all-supporting hand,
To bow submissive to the high command,—
To trust Him still in life's beclouded day,
In resignation then to meekly say,
" Thy will be done ! "

Yet this had been done myriads of times since that gloomy night when our Saviour said it, while sweating great drops of blood.

Perhaps few men living can reckon amongst their acquaintances such a variety of character as I can, and fewer still have the unspeakable privilege of communing with so many remarkable illustrations of the sustaining power of religion in almost every condition of life, but more especially during long and painful bodily affliction. Two of these I have already recorded in "Priscilla" and "Trials;" others still remain, several of whom constitute the chief subjects of the following sketches :—

MARY.

In a comparatively quiet street, not far from the Leeds Town Hall, in a small but neat chamber, may be seen one of my many sick friends. Judging from her letters, her choice selection of books, and her keen perception of the pure and beautiful in language, poetry, and flowers, she must have had some one to care for her in her early days. She belongs to the Society of Friends, and I first heard of her while staying at the house of Mr. John Whiting, Moreland Terrace, also one of the Friends. I was introduced to her by a young Friend, who, on entering the room, took hold of the invalid's hand, saying,—

"How art thou to-day, Mary? I think thou looks nicely. I have brought with me one whom I think thou wilt be glad to meet, and who wishes to see thee."

A slight flush came over her placid countenance, but with a quiet smile she replied,—

"I have much to be grateful for, and I thank thee for thy kindness in remembering me, and bringing John Ashworth with thee." Then looking to where I stood, she held out her hand, saying, "Thou art come to see a poor creature, but I make thee very welcome. Wilt thou take a

chair, for I want to talk with thee about thy poor people, and thy labours amongst them."

Interviews betwixt kindred spirits are amongst the sweetest joys of earth. Relationships, pure and strong, often arise from sympathy of views and feelings. Several years have rolled away since this our first meeting, and have made me more acquainted with Mary's character and history, but only confirming my first impression, that this daughter of suffering was a child of God, an heir of heaven.

"I thank thee for thy kindness in remembering me," was her feeling expression to the young guide that first led me to her sick chamber. No doubt many had long forgotten her, and many more, since the day she found herself a helpless invalid, had passed away. Some that had smoothed her pillow, shared her sorrows, and wiped her falling tears, had gone to brighter climes, leaving their afflicted one still in the wilderness. Farewells and parting scenes are amongst the sad way-marks through life ; and on them, though sad, the memory often lingers longest, recalling again and again the looks, words, smiles, and tears,—the hopes, joys, and sorrows of the loved ones gone before. And the more of these loved ones that pass before us through the gates of paradise, the nearer paradise seems to us, and the pain of parting is almost lost by the sweet thought of again uniting.

Amongst the felicities of this life, the bright scenes of this world, is an unbroken, happy family. And such was once the family of my sick friend,—all there, all round the hearth and the altar, when her health began to fail. The mother was taken first ; three months after the father lost all his property, but not his character ; four months after her sister died, saying with her last breath, " If God will permit me, I will come back and be your guardian angel."

A family of nine became reduced to three,—the father, sister, and my sick friend. For ten years this sister, night and day, watched over the afflicted one ; then her summons came. In her last hours she begged to be laid beside her she had so long and tenderly nursed, and there, in the same bed, lying by her side, she breathed her last. For a short time her dear father was spared to her. But one evening he entered her room, his countenance radiant with joy, to inform his sick child of a cheering discourse delivered in the Meeting House that day, on the blessedness of the heavenly city. After sitting some time, he took a more than usually affectionate leave. In the morning he was found dead in his bed !

How dreary, dark, and desolate must Mary's lot now appear to those whose Christian experience has never sounded those deeper depths of God's mysterious providence ! Die we must, and it matters little how, or when, or where, if we die well. It is far more comforting to know that our dear relatives and friends are safely anchored in heaven's harbour, than to be daily fearing that they will be wrecked on the shoals of perdition. When heaven calls the Christian home,

It is the voice that Jesus sends
To call them to His arms.

Mary knew this, and through her tears could say, "It is the Lord ; let Him do what seemeth Him good ;" for, in one of her letters, to me, she says,

"When our heavenly Father puts His dear children into the fiery furnace, He sits by to conduct the needful refining process, and will, in His own time,—which is ever the best time,—bid them come forth purified. People of the world count it all joy when they are in ease and affluence, but the

real Christian is taught to count it all joy when he is tried as gold in the fire, for—

“He knows how much the weak can bear,
And helps them when they cry ;
The strongest have no strength to spare,
For such He'll strongly try.”

Mary's letter may seem to the wordling very melancholy, but let the wordling remember that one drop of the Atlantic bears a greater proportion to that ocean than time bears to eternity. A child of God may have, on the one hand, “affliction for a moment,” but he has, on the other, “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” The darkest day of the Christian is streaked with light, more precious than the brightest day of the sinner. Of this, Mary is only one of thousands of witnesses ; but she *is* one, for there are few happier creatures on this side of heaven. And part of that happiness consists in recognising the hand of God in everything, in being calm and cheerful, never idle, doing all the good she can by earing for others. Though utterly unable to move her body, she often employs her mind and hands in writing, reading, sewing, knitting, and working useful articles. I was much pleased with the neatness and orderly arrangement of Mary's sick chamber, and saw how attention to a few little matters greatly contributed to her comfort. Her canary, singing his sweet songs, going in and out of his cage at pleasure, often alighting on her finger to beg a crumb of bread, had been her cheerful companion for eight years. She had small flower-pots with choice plants,—a little mahogany and glazed library of well-selected books, so close to her bed, that she could reach the volume she wanted,—and a small writing-case, containing all she required for recording her thoughts or conducting her correspondence.

But what surprised me most was her book-stall. On a stand beside her bed there was a square box, with a glass cover. In this box she had several shillings' worth of small religious works, ranging in price from threepence to tenpence. These she had bought at the wholesale price, and was selling them to her visitors retail ; and all the profits went to relieve a very poor, afflicted creature, residing in the neighbourhood. Mary had heard of her sad condition, and, wishing to send her a little help, had established her book-stall to provide her with means, for which the poor creature was very thankful. When I first saw this book-stall, and learned the purpose for which it was opened, I thought that Mary, in her weakness and helpless affliction, was doing more on her sick bed for the glory of God, and the poor and needy, than thousands who were blessed with unbroken health and ample means. I believe Mary has a strong desire to do all the good she can,—her sympathies are very wide. I have received from her, as a present for my poor people of the "Destitute," a beautiful complete needle-case, in silk, with pattern in white beads, her own working, which sold for fifteen shillings.

It is now thirty years since Mary sickened, and lay down in the bed from which she has never been able to rise. During those thirty years, dear relatives and friends have passed away. A kind and affectionate servant, who has been long in the family, is all that now remains of a once numerous household. If the honest doubter respecting the truths of Christianity longs to be convinced,—if the formalist in religion wishes to see the power of real saving grace,—if the timid Christian desires to know if strength will be given according to the day,—if the long-tried child of God mournfully asks, "Can and will He still sustain me in these my heavy sorrows?"—and if the minister of the Gospel wants

powerful evidence of what faith in Christ can do in upholding, cheering, blessing and sustaining, through thirty years of bereavements affliction, and pain,—let them see this monument of triumph and victory.

I now take leave of Mary, more than ever persuaded that religion is the pearl of great price—the one thing needful.

ANOTHER MARY.

BEFORE leaving Leeds I will again call to see another of my sick friends, residing in a neat cottage near Brunswick Chapel. She, too, is called Mary.

I have often thought that the busy, bustling crowds, passing to and fro through the noisy streets of our towns and cities, little know how frequently they are very near to sights and scenes vastly different from the dazzle and show presented by trade and commerce, carriages, shops and fashions, hearty laughter and merry greeting. The lowered blinds and closed shutters tell us when the dead are near,—but how many chambers there are where the last foe is just entering, with short warning! How many where the soft tread and faint whisper tell of feeble frames and anxious thoughts; and how many on the couch and the bed are doomed to the feebleness of old age, or chained by chronic disease as with bars of iron! This last is the condition of our sick friend near Brunswick Chapel.

This sufferer, in her younger years, was in business, and it was while serving in the shop that she caught a cold, followed by a severe illness, which terminated in the stiffening of every joint, and deprived her of all power to move hand or foot. During this time she not only lost all the hard-earned savings of many years, and became absolutely penni-

less, but was in debt to tradesmen with whom she had done business. This greatly distressed her, and, out of the money contributed by friends for her sustenance, she managed, in ten or twelve years, by denying herself everything save the barest necessities, to scrape together a sum sufficient to pay all her debts! Her thoughtfulness and kindness for those who suffer is most remarkable, and many deserving cases have, by her instrumentality, been brought under the notice of those who are able and willing to relieve the poor and distressed.

On my first visit to this patient sufferer she expressed her great pleasure at seeing me, and I felt thankful that anything I had written had been made to her a blessing, or had given her one moment's comfort. She spoke of "Priscilla," and "Trials," as having greatly strengthened her faith and brightened her hopes, and, with deep emotion, offered up a prayer on my behalf, that God would still keep me in my labours amongst the poor, the sick, and the afflicted.

She has several kind friends, who almost daily call upon her. One benevolent gentleman has paid her rent for seventeen years, and frequently calls to converse with her. Another gentleman has his regular periods of calling, and spends much time in storing her mind with the precious promises of God's word; and a Christian lady often calls to read to her the Lessons and Prayers of the day. These are, to Mary, friends indeed, and she cannot speak of their kindness without weeping.

Oh, how rich and joyous are the pleasures of doing good! How sweet the thought that we can, in any measure, mitigate human woe, or increase, in the smallest degree, the happiness of one suffering fellow-creature! If, by a look, a smile, or a word, we can stay the falling tear,—if, by giving

a little of our abundance, we lessen the anxieties of indigence, producing gladness where otherwise there would be sadness, surely angels must covet such a privilege? The sordid, selfish man knows nothing of this. He may have mountains of gold, and millions of acres, and be clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, but there is a worm at his heart, a pang in his conscience; for only they that *do* good can ever *enjoy* good. Only they whose souls are moved with sympathy can know the higher states of human felicity. And how much do such as Mary stand in need of our commiseration!

It is hardly possible for the healthy and strong to form any adequate conception of the truly helpless condition of Mary, who, for twenty-eight years, has lain in her present deplorable state, without power to move, and entirely dependent on others, even for a drop of water. And yet she is made happy by the sweet presence of her Saviour, the deep consolations of religion, the glorious prospects of an eternal home amongst those that are clothed in white robes, and have come out of great tribulation.

This home in heaven, as the sufferer lies
On her bed of pain, and uplifts her eyes
To that bright world, what a joy is given
By the blessed thought of a home in heaven!

Yes! Mary is happy, amidst loneliness, helplessness, and dependence, reaching over the long period of twenty-eight years. Her redeemed soul basks in celestial sunshine, lighting up her countenance with holy rapture, teaching all around her the unspeakable happiness of being a child of God, and possessing what the world can neither give nor take away.

We now take our leave of Mary, to call on another of my sick friends, who also resides in Yorkshire.

A G N E S.

THOSE who have stood on the top of Castleberg Rock, overlooking the little, quiet, respectable town of Settle, in Yorkshire, will see stretching out for many miles, some of the finest grazing ground in the world. The farmsteads, dotting these rich pasture-lands, seem from a distance to be homes of peace and plenty; and the inhabitants of the miniature city, at the foot of the rock, carry on their commercial pursuits without the breathless race for riches that characterizes the residents of our large towns. Here the excited London, Liverpool, or Manchester tradesman would be likely to go mad, for the prospects of becoming immediately rich would be cut off. To him Settle would be almost as the silent cities of Idumea. But perhaps his greatest surprise would be, that he had time to think of his eternal prospects, and on the short span of his present existence.

In the month of February, while carefully descending the rock, in the company of my host, Mr. Tatham, we were surprised to see, amidst the frost and snow, a wall-flower in full bloom. Mr. Tatham plucked the flower, saying, "The winter's storms have not killed thee, thou pretty little thing!" How it was I know not, but the sight of that flower drew my thoughts to an inhabitant of one of the small cottages at the foot of the rock. Flowers are all beautiful, especially winter flowers, but in that cottage there was something more beautiful,—a meek, patient, suffering Christian, who, for many winters, had bloomed amidst the chilling, blasting winds of bereavement, sickness, and poverty.

My visit to this remarkably small, but pleasing neat cottage, constitutes one of the waymarks of my life; for here I learned another lesson that taught me how often I

had been unthankful for mercies, and forgetful of the goodness and providence of God. To many, the sickness of a few days, a week, or a month, is a terrible trial for their patience, and a cause of much fretfulness and murmuring ; but here years may be counted since Agnes was smitten with weakness of the spine. Yet there she still lies, the helpless victim of this terrible stroke.

Sometime after Agnes began to be sick, her mother became unable to leave her bed. For three years they lay in two small separate rooms,—Agnes upstairs, and the mother below,—and, for the whole of that time, they never saw each other. Both were so helpless that neither could move. When the mother was laid in her coffin, that coffin was brought to the bedside of the bereaved child, that she might lay her clammy hand on the parent's cold forehead, before she was carried to her silent home. Agnes often speaks of this as her greatest trial, but the thought of a mother in heaven is not a mourning without hope.

To be sick and penniless,—to subsist on the small pittance allowed by the town,—to depend upon others for a place where the weary may lay their head,—to be only able to speak in a whisper,—to be shut out from the busy world by day, and often to lie sleepless and restless in the night,—to endure pain of body and weariness of mind, without the faintest hope of ever having relief, till the stricken form shall be laid in the dust, is the sad, sad lot of poor Agnes Cooper. How often would the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table be to such an unspeakable blessing ! And we are glad to know that a few such crumbs have found their way to her feeble hands, yielding the rich reward of the falling tear of thankfulness. By the kindness of a wealthy Friend, residing at Stratford-on-Avon, I have been provided

with special means for special cases, and Agnes has not been forgotten. When handing to her the small portion allotted, her face first became red, then white ; tears shot from her eyes, and, speechless with joy, she pointed to the spot where she wished me to kneel and join her in thankfulness to Him who had raised up this unknown friend. It was a moment of unspeakable bliss. Would that the donor had been there to witness it ! But He who was the real Giver would see and record this gratitude from His suffering child.

Yes ! Agnes, like the two Marys of Leeds, is one of the Lord's precious jewels, and she, like them, knew the real source of her deepest and firmest comfort. In her last letter she writes,—

“I am now thirty years old, and it is fifteen years since my feeble form sank beneath the stroke ; but I think that it is somehow all for the best, though I cannot now understand it, and it is sometimes hard to say, ‘Thy will be done !’ The last fortnight I have been so happy, both night and day ; the sweet promises of the Saviour have been more than ever precious. I have been forced to cry out, ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits !’ Oh, I feel I can trust Him to the end.

‘For what are all my sufferings here,
If, Lord, thou count me meet,
With the enraptured host to appear,
And worship at Thy feet !

‘Give joy or grief, give ease or pain,
Take life or friends away,
I soon shall meet them all again,
In that eternal day.’

“Oh ! to be present with the Lord, where there is no poverty, pain, or tears,—here the inhabitants never say

they are sick. What a glorious prospect ! And this prospect, through Him that washed me from my sins in His own blood, is mine ;—yes, it is mine ! ”

We now take our leave of Agnes. Like Mary, she has chosen the good part. In her distress she sought and found the Lord, and in the little cottage at the foot of Castleberg Rock, there is another witness THAT RELIGION IS AN EVER-GREEN.

A N N .

No doubt there are many persons still living who can remember this world before it was turned downside up ;—when men made their wills, appointed executors, and in tears bid adieu to dear friends, when setting out from our provincial towns to London, by the amazingly rapid coach the “ Highflier,” performing the journey in three days, “ God willing.” Then, pack-horses plied betwixt market towns, bearing on their backs the merchandize of counties ; and the poor tradesman thought it something grand to put on his great coat and muffler, wrap straw bands round his legs and feet, and mount the grocer’s cart at midnight, to get to the nearest market by day-break in the morning. And when that wonderful and daring innovation on good old customs, the *canal*, was first opened, people cried shame on the companies for cutting up good land, declared they would never venture their lives in such a dangerous mode of journeying, and wondered what they next would live to see.

I have not seen much of these old-world views, for they were dissolving and other scenes appearing, when I first began looking around me. But I well remember once

paying my fare at Lancaster to go down (or up) to Kendal by a two-horse packet-boat; and I also remember a loving old couple at the starting-place greatly perplexing each other. The husband was urging his wife to venture on board the vessel, thinking there was not much danger, and she was beseeching him to walk for greater safety. Not being able to persuade him, she timidly came on deck, saying—

“ Well, I will go if thou goes; for if thou art drowned I might as well be drowned too.”

It was while on this journey, from Lancaster to Kendal, that I heard two old men talking about one of their neighbours, who had been long lying on a sick bed, and expressing a hope she might soon be released. They called her ANN.

It was more than twenty years after this, my first visit to Kendal, that I received an urgent request to speak at a public meeting on behalf of a society, having for its object the visiting and relieving the indigent sick and poor of that town. On my arrival I was informed by Mr. Gaskell, one of the oldest workers in this truly Christian labour, that a person who had been long afflicted was very anxious I should call and see her. On hearing the name, I was astonished to find that it was the same I had heard the two old men conversing about on the boat, and I at once promised to pay her a visit as soon as possible.

Those who have travelled through this stone-built town, bordering the lake district of Westmoreland, will have observed that, like many ancient places, it principally consists of one long, wide street, out of which run numerous courts or narrow openings leading to groups of buildings occupied by many of the inhabitants. It was up one of these courts, in Strickland-gate, where the invalid I was requested to see

resided, and I was pleased with the neat and comfortable appearance of many of the small white-washed dwellings, particularly the one we entered. I am always glad to see clean, happy-looking cottage homes, especially amongst professors of religion ; for I do not believe in a dirty Christianity. And the whitened door-step, the well-rubbed oak stairs, and the orderly little back chamber in which lay my sick friend, all told of a careful, thoughtful nurse, whom I afterwards found to be, what I at first suspected, a kind, patient Christian, greatly respected by all, and much beloved by her who had been so long the object of her care.

My first interview with Ann was one of sadness, mingled with much pleasure. I could not but remember the long—long time she had been lying feeble and almost helpless ; that one generation had passed away and another had come since that fearful accident, which resulted in this lingering weakness. But when I saw her cheerful, happy-looking countenance, and heard her tell of the deep-settled peace she constantly enjoyed, springing from union and communion with the Saviour, my concern for her body was lost, in sharing the joys of her soul.

The accident referred to above, and which nearly proved fatal on the spot, took place on Mint Bridge, about one mile from Kendal. Ann, with several others, had been out in a conveyance. On returning, from some cause, it was upset ; her head was dashed against the stones, and the conveyance fell on her body. She was carried home unconscious, having received injuries from which nothing short of a miracle could ever restore her. She was then nearly seventeen years of age, and had lost her father about five years previous to the accident. Before he died he affectionately enjoined upon Ann his desire that she would still attend

the place of worship with her mother, until she was able to judge for herself. Her mother died six years after, committing her child to the care of Him who is the Father of the fatherless. The few pounds left by the mother was well husbanded by Ann's nurse, every penny spent being carefully entered in a book, until the last penny was gone.

And now came a severe trial of Ann's faith ; she was reluctant to receive parish relief, knowing how very poor many were who had to pay the rates. She prayed earnestly for many weeks that the Lord would some way send her deliverance from this sore trouble. One day a Christian lady, calling to see her, left a sovereign on her bed, and soon after she received five pounds through the post. She was overwhelmed with joy, for she considered these gifts as from the skies, and at once declined to receive any further aid from the town.

Another test and painful trial of her faith was permitted, one that almost caused her to murmur. Being able to write, she spent many happy hours in exchanging letters with Christian friends, and in recommending her Saviour to those who knew Him not, but a stroke, which took away the use of her right hand deprived her of this comfort. This great loss often caused her to weep, until one day, seeing on the wall a portrait of Milton after he was struck blind, she dried her tears, and thanked God she could yet read her Bible and see the glorious light of day.

Those that are able to move about, that live amongst, or frequently see the green fields, can form no adequate conception of the intense longing many have for such a privilege. Ann could well remember climbing the heath-clad hills, and looking on the wide-spread landscape ; she could tell of the time when she gathered the daisies, bluebells and

buttercups ; and often had a strong desire once again to have a glimpse of long lost scenes. Her room being small, and but one place for her bed, she could not look through the little window. One of her friends, hearing of her wish, fixed a looking-glass in such a position that, through the window, it reflected a green patch of rising ground behind the house. She shouted with delight, exclaiming, "A green field ! a green field ! oh, how beautiful ! how beautiful !"

In a letter received from her, written I think with the left hand, she says,—

"Language would fail to tell what Jesus has done for me, what kind Christian friends I have had, especially H. W. W., who has been to me a mother,—and what a faithful and affectionate nurse for all these years ! Oh, I have proved the Lord true to His promise in every case. All may put their trust in Him, especially poor invalids, for He will never leave or forsake them that believe on Him."

No doubt the joys of this life are many to those that receive them with thankful hearts. The Christian in every state has great possessions here, but greater in prospect, and his faith, stretching over Jordan's streams, beholds fairer fields beyond the flood, and hopes to bask in happier climes. The blessedness of God's children, in sickness or in health, living or dying, none but God's children know.

Ann, like the poor man at the pool of Bethesda, has now been laid on her bed for thirty-eight years. That feeble, afflicted man had no friend to help him into the healing pool, until he met with Jesus, the feeling friend of all. He then heard this short sentence, "Take up thy bed and walk," and in amazement he rose, not only able to walk but to carry his bed ;—a lesson to all, that, when Christ bids us carry our burdens, he will give us strength to carry them.

He found Christ at the end of his thirty-eight weary years, Ann found Him at the beginning ; for at nineteen she enjoyed the sweet consciousness of sins forgiven. Christ could long since have raised her from her bed as He did the cripple at the pool-side, for all power is His ; but it is quite as great a miracle to give grace and patience to meekly endure and even joyfully suffer, as to take the cause of our suffering away. And, in this respect, the thirty-eight years' bed-ridden Christian at Kendal is as much a monument of God's goodness and power as the healed man of Bethesda ; and no doubt as willing as he was to give all the glory to Him. And, from the little cottage in Strickland Gate, comes forth another witness that can stand side by side with Paul, and like him say, "There is laid up for me a crown."

N A O M I .

WE now leave the border towns of Westmoreland, and descend into one of the manufacturing districts of Lancashire, to visit another of my sick friends, and one not the least interesting.

Those who have attempted to trace the course of the river Roche, from the various little rills at its source to its junction with the Irwell, will have observed many bends and windings as it wends its way amongst rocks and woods, and well cultivated fields. In several places, the scenery on the banks present great variety, and is often grand and imposing. Many cotton and woollen mills, for the purpose of obtaining water or steam power, have been built on the banks of the river, giving employment to some hundreds of the inhabitants.

At one of those mills, called Hooley Bridge, near Heywood, Naomi, the subject of this sketch, was at one time a

healthy, cheerful, active labourer, and, like thousands of young people found in these mills, could sing the sweet hymns learned at the Church and Sunday school, amidst the rumbling and rattle of machinery. She can sing yet, but under greatly altered circumstances. Her voice mingles not now with her fellow workers at the loom, or with the sublimer songs of the sanctuary, but in her lonely cottage chamber, upon a bed of pain.

Naomi was about sixteen years of age when a spinal weakness, felt by herself, became apparent to others. The means adopted to stay its progress being ineffectual, she gradually sunk beneath its influence, until she became utterly unable longer to walk the short distance from her home to the mill ; and in a few months her feebleness was so great, that she had not strength to rise from her chair. Ultimately she became so helpless that she was forced to remain continually in bed.

Sickness is sickness at any time of life. Even in old age, after having moved and mingled in the mazes and bustle of the ever-rolling current of active, busy scenes, it is sad to have the energies prostrated, the course of action arrested, and to be bound down in the corner with trembling limbs, able to move only at the will of others, or lie on the couch feeble and helpless, until the weary wheel of life stands still. Though this condition to the old may to some extent be looked for and expected, yet much patience and resignation is required to endure it. But to be smitten down in the very spring of life, when the world's pleasures are just dawning, and joyous hope daily brightening,—when the thorns and thistles of life, yet neither seen nor felt, are covered over with emerald leaves and scented flowers, then to fall from the ranks of healthy, cheerful, merry companions, with

blighted prospects and dark forbodings, needs something more than earth can give to prevent madness or absolute despair.

Such was the condition of Naomi ten years ago, and such it still remains. During the first three years of her helplessness she had some relief from the weary hours, in being able to refresh her mind with the pleasures of reading. For this privilege she was very thankful, and greatly prized it; but, at the end of three years, intense pains in the head began to seriously affect her eyes. After a time these pains were followed by dimness, darkness, and at last by utter blindness. Then—

The glorious sun, the moon, the stars,
The hills, the dales, the fields, the flowers,

on which Naomi had often looked with innocent delight,—all disappeared in blackness and darkness. Yes! Naomi was BLIND!

Was not the first burden laid on our grievously afflicted sister sufficient? Was it not enough to be for three years absolutely deprived of the power to raise herself from her bed, and all the time dependent on others for a crust of bread or a drop of water? Could not this deeper wound have been spared her? Surely the cross at first was heavy enough, but to be

“ Shut out from the living while amongst the living;
Dark as the grave amidst the bustling world;
At once from business and from pleasure barr’d;
No more to view the beauty of the spring,
Nor see the face of kindred or of friend.”

Let Naomi herself answer these questions. The Bard of Avon draws well the horrors of blindness, but there are deeper depths of pleasure than worldly poets know. The

secrets of the Lord are with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant. And the nearer we get to God, the more we shall know His secrets, and better understand His covenant. He that tints the lily, clothes the grass, and notices the falling sparrow, numbers the hairs on the heads of His children. This Naomi firmly believes, for she is one of His children ; she has the utmost confidence in the declaration that " all things work together for good to them that love God ;" and she knows that sickness, blindness, and dependence are amongst the " all things." All the love of angels and of men falls infinitely short of the love of Naomi's Saviour. This she feels, and it is to her a real light, a heavenly radiance, shining into her happy soul.

On one of my visits to see Naomi, I was much concerned about her painful condition. She was unusually sore in body, and the pains in her head were more frequent. I thought it possible that, for a few pounds, a softer substance, placed under her weary frame, might considerably relieve her, and perhaps prevent the pains in her head ; and through the kindness of those friends who trust me with money for the poor, I was able to purchase a water bed, which was to her an unspeakable boon.

It is now ten years since Naomi, through weakness and feebleness of body, became unable longer to attend the calls of the factory bell, or join those Sabbath gatherings that she so dearly loved in the school and church, of which she is a member. During seven of these years, the orbs of day have been closed, and she has been in one perpetual night. Milton's lines,—

" Dark, dark, dark, amidst the blaze of noon :
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse ;
Without all hope of day,"

are powerfully descriptive of Naomi's condition, but her faith in the love of Christ sustains her, and she is another evidence that there is no condition of life that transcends the power of religion to relieve. Her resignation to God's will is amazing, and the sweet peace arising from Divine love flowing through her happy soul, wonderfully cheers her.

I now leave poor, afflicted, blind Naomi, quoting her words at our last interview,—“ For I reckon that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.”

ELIZABETH.

LET us now call on Elizabeth, the last, but not the least, of our “ Sick Friends,” residing at Bolton, in Lancashire.

When Bolton had only half its present inhabitants, when a few benevolent persons met to talk about the temporal circumstances of Samuel Crompton, before this generation appeared, and long before Bolton sent a member to parliament, or could boast of a mayor and corporation, the subject of this sketch was laid helpless on a sick-bed. In a group of cottages, called Union Buildings, now pulled down to make room for the railway, resided a labouring man of the name of Hill, with a wife and five children, of which Elizabeth was the eldest. Up to the age of sixteen, she did what she could to earn her own bread, and was a great help to her mother. Then weakness of the spine set in, and laid her utterly prostrate. She had been eighteen years in this condition when the house was pulled down, and, when removed, so entire was her paralysis, that she had to be

carefully carried, as if in her coffin, on the shoulders of four men—the doctor walking by her side,—and quietly laid in the cottage she now occupies in Great Moor Street. Those who have read “Priscilla,” will remember that she often corresponded with Elizabeth. Fellow-sufferers have kindred feelings, weeping with them that weep. It was through reading those letters that I first became acquainted with Elizabeth, and since then I have often had the privilege of sitting in her homely cottage, and hearing her tale of trials and triumphs. Speaking of her earlier years, she said,—

“When I first became convinced that there was little or no hope that I should ever recover, and saw that I must be a burden and continual source of anxiety to my parents, I wished to die. Oh, how I besought the Lord then to take me, in mercy to others! My father’s wages were sometimes very small; my little sisters and brothers were too young to earn anything; the direst poverty visited our home, and we were frequently reduced to the last morsel of bread. One Saturday, I felt quite faint for the want of food. There was nothing for any of us. My mother was greatly distressed, for she did not know what to do. I covered my face in bed, and wept and prayed that God would send us help, and, while I was weeping and praying, a man came in with a basin of broth and five shillings. This deliverance greatly affected my mother. She showed me the broth and the money, saying,—

“How could the man know we were starving?”

“Mother,” I replied, “the Lord sent him.”

“When the man saw our condition, he went and told a good Christian lady what he had seen. She came and told us she was just setting out for a month’s pleasure to Black-

pool, and was glad she had heard of our case before she had left. She informed us she had ordered a person to see us weekly until she returned, when she would see to us herself. This lady was kind to me as long as she lived ; she is dead now, and so are many of my old dear friends. But the Lord raises up new ones ; and I wish, Mr. Ashworth, you would tell all God's afflicted children, that He who cares for the sparrows will not forget us."

No doubt many of Elizabeth's old friends are gone. Many ministers of the Gospel that have read and prayed at her bed-side,—many benevolent Christians, young and old, that sought her house as a means of grace, have gone to their account ; but others rise up, to whom she can tell her hopes and joys, and with whom she can join in songs of praise.

Having to attend a meeting in Bolton, I called in Moor-street, with a small present sent from friend at Stratford. Elizabeth had that day been very happy, telling her dear, patient, loving, God-fearing sister, who has nursed and attended to her wants for many years, that some blessing was coming that day, but what it would be she could not tell. On putting the little money I had brought into her hands, she looked at it, then at me. She was so surprised that her thin hands lost the power to hold it, and it fell on the bed.

"Sister !" she exclaimed, "sister ! the blessing is come ! I told you it would. Oh ! sister, we will have a better fire now, and a little stronger tea. Oh, do help me to praise the Lord for His goodness, for He is better to me than He is to anybody in Bolton !"

Hear this, ye that fret, murmur, and pine, under little clouds and little trials ; and ye that doubt, and weep, and

fear lest God should forget to be gracious. Here is one of His children who, for FORTY-TWO YEARS, has lain helpless on a sick-bed,—so helpless, that if that bed was on fire, she could not move ; yet she is rejoicing and praising her dear Saviour for His goodness, and declaring that He is better to her, than to any of her neighbours. And hear this, ye who tell us that the religion of the Bible is a cunningly devised fable. Ask Elizabeth and her answer will be,—

“ On this my steadfast soul relies,—
Father, Thy mercy never dies.”

I have often felt my weakness, both in speaking and writing, but never more than in preparing these short sketches. What tongue or pen can give the biographies of lives both remarkable and monotonous ? We have records of heroines, thrilling accounts of Bordicea, of the Maid of Orleans, of Grace Darling, Elizabeth Fry, Miss Nightingale, and others, all full of interest ; but may not a nobility of soul be as much manifested in meekly bowing to a painful providence, as boldly performing the most glorious deeds ?

I now take leave of my SICK FRIENDS for the present ; others still remain, of which something may yet be said. But I leave them with a conviction that, though they have unitedly been in pain, affliction, and helplessness for *one hundred and sixty-five years*, yet they are amongst the happiest creatures in this world. They may go down in their graves in silence, but they have taught a lesson to thousands ; and that lesson is, that heaven's brightest beams can pierce the darkest cloud.

GEORGE.

AMONGST the many callers at my house and office during the past year, there was one young man who, like most beggars, tried to look as sheepish as possible. Pulling off his hat, and looking to the ground, with a pitiable whine he said :—

“ If you please, will you relieve me ? ”

“ What is your trade, my young man ? ” I asked.

“ A cabinet-maker, sir,” was his answer, still whining.

“ What age are you ? ” I again asked.

“ Six-and-twenty, sir.”

“ Are you in good health ? ”

“ Yes, sir ; but I cannot get work,”—still whining.

I had been standing on the door-step, in my back yard during this conversation, but, stepping down, I stood beside him, and, taking off my hat, said, “ Now, my young man, look at me.” Then, holding down my head, and trying to look as pitiable and sheepish as he did, I, in the same doleful whine, said,—

“ If you please, will you relieve me ? If you please, will you relieve me ? ” Then, looking him right in the face, I asked him what he thought of me. But he was too much astonished to speak. Then, putting on my hat, and requesting him to do the same, I said,—

“ My young man, here you are, in good health and strength, with a good trade, and work plentiful, and you know it ;

yet you are sniffing and whining at people's doors, with your 'Please, will you relieve me?' Why, man, if you had the spirit of a sparrow you would never so degrade yourself. Hold up your head, shake yourself, look into God's blue sky, and be a man. Here is sixpence; and now, let that be the last money you ever beg. Work, man, work, and no more whining. Whistle, and sing, and work, and be happy."

I thought for a moment he would have refused the sixpence. His face was red with indignation; and when he did take it he returned no thanks, but walked rather quickly away.

About four months after, the same young man called again, and, gently removing his hat, asked, with a smile, if I knew him.

"I do not, my young friend," I replied.

"Do you remember giving a young man, that came to your back door begging, a good blowing up, and mimicking him, whining, and saying, 'Please, will you relieve me?'"

"Yes, I think I do."

"Well, sir, I am that young man; and look, sir, I am now worth six pounds, all got by working, not whining and begging. I got employment the same day; and every hour that terrible whine, and 'Please, will you relieve me?' has been ringing in my ears. O! I could have shot you that day. But you did me a great kindness, for I did shake myself, and look into God's blue sky, and work. I have never been in a public-house since, for it was there I learned to be idle; and I am returning to my parents a new man. I wished first to call and tell you. And now, Mr. Ashworth, I beg you will serve every young man as you served me, for it will be the best thing you can do for them. Good day, sir, and thank you for what you have done for me."

What a mercy for this young man, that the iron bands of indolence were snapped before they had for ever bound him in their fatal coils ! A few months, or years, might have dragged him into the abyss of shame, infamy, and crime, inseparable from a life of idleness. For idleness is a self-inflicted curse ; a sin against God and man ; the parent of almost every evil. Its victims are legion. George, the principal subject of this narrative, was one of them ; and I pray that this sketch of his life may be a warning to many.

George, in his early life, and after he was married, was by trade a hand-loom cotton weaver,—at one time a good business. He resided in the neighbourhood of Rochdale, where hand-loom weaving—both cotton and woollen—constituted the principal occupation of the inhabitants, and by which many of the careful and industrious have risen to great wealth. But George, like many weavers of this period, would only work three or four days a-week, however much “ pieces ” might be required by his employers ; for the more labor was wanted the less he cared about it. Like thousands of such characters, then as now, he had the greatest difficulty to tell what to do with the Sunday. The day God has given for special blessings hung the most heavily on his hands. Most of this precious day he spent in bed, until he became so tired he got up to rest. Towards evening, if the night was too light for other purposes, he would get his pack of cards, and go out amongst his companions, drinking and card-playing. This card-playing was to George what it has been to many—both rich and poor, high and low, vulgar and polished, old and young—a terrible besetment, bringing in its train untold evils ; it is one of

Satan's principal snares, and specially adapted to the indolent, thoughtless, and profligate.

There is an old Spanish proverb, "If Satan finds a man idle he sets him to work." George was often found idle; for, besides lounging in bed the most of the Sunday, he seldom went to work on the Monday. He would go miles to a foot-race, a dog-race, or a dog-fight where he was sure to meet with the most idle of the country; for like and like always go together. Towards Tuesday noon, or Wednesday morning, he began thinking about his loom; and his poor wife, besides doing her own weaving and housework, had very frequently to help him with his piece, by working during the night.

The wife of George was one of the most melancholy looking creatures I ever saw. She was tall, thin, with high cheek bones, black hair, and had once been good looking. She was cleanly in her habits; and, I well remember, her principal dress consisted of a bed-gown then generally worn, a quilted green worsted petticoat, a white linen cap, with full screen, a crimson cloak, and black bonnet. She seldom entered any of the neighbours' houses, and seemed to avoid company, except when she attended a cottage service held in the neighbourhood on Sunday evenings. She always seemed sad; I never saw her smile, for her husband, besides being idle, was a great tyrant to her and the children, as most idle husbands are. But he was something more than either indolent or tyrannical; which, when she discovered it, made her miserable indeed. She had trouble enough before; but when she found out what her husband really was, her sorrow was greatly increased.

Oh, idleness! idleness! thou parent of many sins,—thou nurse of every crime,—thou Dead Sea, that swallowest up

every good thing,—thou grave of every virtue,—what wretchedness has thou produced ? Thou art a most fruitful source of temptation ; a field where the enemy sows many tares. The idle man's heart is Satan's workshop ; he travels so slowly that poverty soon overtakes him. He will not plough, and he begs in harvest ; he is always looking for something turning up, instead of working to turn up something.

It has been my lot to mingle much with every description of self-inflicted misery,—in the prison, the union, the night-house, and penitentiary ; in the streets, in dens of infamy, in homes of squallor, filth, and rags ; and I believe that most of the appalling wretchedness I have witnessed springs from idleness, especially amongst the young men and young women. I am grieved to say,—but a conviction of its truth, and a hope it may do good, compels me to declare—that seven out of every ten of the fallen women prowling about our streets are there because they are idle ; they prefer a life of infamy to a life of honest industry. I have found homes of mercy for many such ; but, finding they had to work, they soon left. I have obtained places of service for them amongst kind people, who engaged them with the intention of helping in their reformation, but very few have remained, the places invariably being *too hard*. The injury inflicted by the curse of idleness, on either man or woman, can never be told.

The discovery made by George's wife, that so distressed her, took place late one dark evening. She had often been surprised that he never wanted to go out when it was moonlight ; but, if the night was dark, he would frequently be absent till three or four in the morning. And she had noticed, with grief, that though their children were poorly clad,

he never seemed to care for them, though he kept himself well clothed,—how, she could not tell. She had once ventured to ask him how he got his new clothes ; but he replied with such a terrible oath,—“ What is that to you ? ” that she durst not ask him again.

The night we mention, George went out about ten o'clock. It was very dark and stormy. His wife asked him where he was going, and begged of him to stop at home ; but he told her to mind her own business, and not meddle with his. The moment he was gone she burst into tears, and walked about the house, almost wild with fear. She trembled from head to foot, and all desire for sleep or rest departed. Hour after hour she waited for his return, weeping, walking, sitting, kneeling, praying. For the poor thing sought help from Him who has promised to help in the time of trouble ; who never turns a deaf ear to the cry of the sorrowful ; who sees every tear, and counts every sigh, and who mercifully invites the burdened and heavy-laden to come unto Him for rest.

Hour after hour she waited. The candle died out, and the last embers of the flickering fire blackened in the grate ; still she waited. She often started, thinking she heard his footsteps. At last, certain of his approach, she hastened upstairs, fearing his anger if he found her below. She quickly undressed, and leant out of bed, listening to hear his movements. He gently opened the door, went into the weaving-room, and was there some time,—what doing, she could not tell. He then went to bed, without speaking one word, and it was near noon the following day before he rose to begin weaving.

A few days after, two constables, armed with a search-warrant, came to seek for stolen goods. After a long search, they found several pieces of gold and silver plate hid under

a flag. George had been housebreaking ; the goods were owned, and he was sent to prison. When his time expired he returned home, but not to the home he had left ; for his disgraced wife and children had removed from the village to hide their shame.

For several months after his liberation, George attended better to work, and the family began to improve in circumstances. His poor wife hoped the worst was past ; but when dark nights came again he was more than once out the whole night, and the piece he ought to have woven in a week was in the loom for a month ;—his idle habits had returned. One day the whole country was alarmed by the report that a dreadful robbery, with violence, had been committed at Hopwood Hall, near Middleton. Again George was apprehended, and some of the stolen property found in his possession.

At the time of this second robbery I was a young lad, and went to the free school, in Redcross Street, Rochdale. James, the youngest son of George, was in the same class. One evening he asked me to go with him to the prison, in Rope Street, to enquire if they would let him see his father. He could not get admission, but he put his mouth to the lock-hole, and called out,—

“ Father ! Father ! ”

“ Is that you, James ? ” replied his father. “ If it be, tell your mother to come and see me to-morrow.”

“ Do you want her to bring you anything, father ? ” said the poor lad, weeping.

“ No, nothing but my night-cap,” was his father’s answer.

James lived near to me, and we returned home together. He wished me to call with him, and tell his mother what his father wanted, saying,—

“I cannot tell her without crying, and she will cry too.”

The mother went the following day to see her husband, and called at the school for James on her return. Her eyes were red with weeping. She feared to go the highway, shunning every one she knew, and we came through the fields, past the Oakenroad, Capterhood, and the Pitts, coming out at Passmonds. Just behind the farm-house at Pitts there is a brow ; on the top of this brow James and his mother sat down, for she was greatly distressed. She had never spoken a word from calling at the school, but now her feelings overpowered her. She threw her arms round the neck of her sobbing child, and they both wept aloud. I stood a few yards from them, with tears running down my young cheeks. She sat there till it was dark, and when she arose she took hold of both our hands, and we walked out the narrow, dark road in silence. A few words she said, only a few, but I have never forgotten them :—

“My dear boys, never be idle, never steal ; pray to God to make you honest and good. And you, James, do be a good lad, for your mother’s sake.”

We both promised, and promised I am sure, very solemnly. James, I think, is now in heaven, and I hope the writer, through the mercy of a dear crucified Saviour, is on the way there.

George, with other two men,—John Taylor and Thomas Lang, charged with the same robbery, were examined before the magistrates, and all three sent, heavily ironed, to Lancaster Castle, to await their trial at the next assizes.

How many idle men have entered through the arch of the frowning walls of Lancaster Castle ;—entered, too, *because they were idle* ! for indolence was at the foundation, at the very root of their crimes. How many idle men and women

are at this moment, pacing those narrow dens like wild beasts, or lying on their iron beds in sullen wrath, or writhing with remorse from the fiery stings of a guilty conscience, or sinking in despair, or, where the soul is not yet callous, thinking of homes by them made desolate,—of relatives by them made to blush with shame,—of wife and children made by them to weep and sigh in hopeless sorrow ! Oh, indolence ! indolence !—thou proof and scourge of man's foul sins, what crimes have sprung from thee !

I well remember the intelligence reaching Rochdale that George was condemned to death ; and I also remember that day poor James, his son, could not eat his dinner, but gave it away to the boys in the school. Poor lad ! he was in great trouble. His distracted mother set out for Lancaster, to ask permission to have a last interview with her husband, and to beg his body. The sorrow smitten creature travelled on foot many weary miles on her melancholy errand.

Oh ! virtuous woman, thou wert made
Like heaven's own pure and lovely light,
To cheer life's dark and desert shade,
And guide man's erring footsteps right.

And when the last sad scene is past,
'Tis woman weeps upon his bier ;
Silent, yet long her sorrows last ;
Unseen she sheds affection's tear !

Both her requests were granted, and the night before his execution she was admitted into his cell.

In those parting moments, when holding the hand and looking into the moistened eyes of some dear friend whom we fear we shall never see again, the heart is often filled with irrepressible sorrow. To stand by the death-bed of some loved one, to hear their last whispered farewell, and

witness their last sigh, has often bowed down the stoutest hearts. To take the last look of the closing grave,—closing over the remains of those for whom our affections were stronger than life or death, has brought many to the border of madness. All this is sorrowful enough ; but what must it be for a wife and a mother to take the last look, and speak the last parting word to her husband going to be hanged !

I believe in broken hearts ; I believe there may be anguish so deep, so profound, that all human aid is utterly useless. But I also believe that there is *one* Hand that can bind up broken hearts, and that Hand sustained the wife of George.

After the interview, she took shelter in a cottage house in the town for the night. She thought not of rest, but wandered about the room all night, unable to speak. Early in the morning of that dreadful 20th of April, she heard the sounds of many feet hastening to the castle, to get a good place for seeing the death-struggles of a fellow being. Drunkards, racers, dog-fighters, thieves, and robbers—the scum and dregs of society,—singing obscene songs, whistling, shouting, laughing and swearing,—hundreds of the lowest and laziest characters gathered round the gallows. Only such could bear to look upon such a scene ; for a man that can take pleasure in seeing another man hanged, is not unlikely to be hanged himself.

George was executed. After he was cut down, his body was handed over to his trembling, sobbing wife. She had a coffin ready, and hired a cart to carry his remains to Rochdale. When the crowd of idlers had dispersed, the coffin was lifted into the cart, and she began to retrace her steps the wearisome, dreary miles, she had come. For a long time she walked alone behind the cart—walked until she was faint and foot-sore. Yet, weary as she was, she refused to

ride, thinking it disrespectful to the dead. But, her strength failing her, she reluctantly consented to be lifted into the cart. Before she reached her home the evening came on ; and, in the black and dark night, sitting beside the coffin containing the body of her dead husband, she passed the house in which they had lived when he committed the first robbery,—the house and home of her children,—and, in the darkness, arrived at the narrow court in Town Meadows, from which George was taken to his grave.

On my last visit to Kendal, to speak on behalf of the Benevolent Society of that town, I called at Lancaster, at the request of a lady friend of mine, to give an address to the poor mothers she had brought together for that purpose. Her father, a magistrate, had kindly obtained permission for me to look through the castle; and, after the address, in company with the lady, I went through the small door of the massive arch of that ancient fortress. The moment the door closed behind us, painful and gloomy thoughts, mingled with other feelings, came rushing into my soul. I was distressed to think that such a huge prison was necessary in any part of this world. Towering walls and battlements, firm as rocks ; grated windows of gloomy cells ; iron doors to deep, dark dungeons ; bolts, bars, chains, and gallows,—all told how terrible sin is in its consequences, even in this life. For Christ's redeemed children, sinners saved by grace, don't come here. Oh, how forcibly these engines of punishment for crime, these penal caverns, these doleful, silent cells, proclaim the glorious truth of the divine word : " Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life *that now is*." Again and again, while walking through the various scenes of this castle of misery, did I feel thank-

ful for the blessed influence of that religion which had saved, protected, and guided me ; for, had it not been for this, I might have been long since found amongst the felons of my country. So, like Paul, my boasting shall be in Christ only.

By the kindness of the Governor of the castle, I obtained a copy of the records of the assizes, as far as related to the trial and sentence of George ; and not till then did I know that he had two companions in the perpetration of the robbery, which was, at that time, a crime punishable with death. The record is as follows :—

“ George ———, John Taylor, and Thomas Lang, tried at Lancaster assizes, March, 1822. George ——— sentenced to death, and executed, 20th of April, 1822 ; the other two were transported for life ;—for a burglary at the house of Mrs. Gregg, Hopwood, near Rochdale, in October, 1821.”

I also requested the Governor to show me the cell where George was confined the night before his execution. I entered : the heavy door was bolted and barred, and in darkness I sat down on the foot of the iron bed, with strange feelings,—feelings not easy to describe. I then went to the fatal door, or window, looking from the castle to the church-yard,—the opening where George stepped out, pini-
oned and bound, to look his last look on this world before he was launched into eternity.

As I stood and looked on this mournful part of the old castle,—mournful because of its painful associations,—and knew that it was the spot where many, in a moment, and in the prime of life, had been violently sent from an erring to an unerring tribunal, I thought and still think, that, if their melancholy end could be traced to its true cause, it might be written on the grave of thousands besides George,

HE WAS RUINED, IMPRISONED, AND HANGED BECAUSE

HE WAS TOO IDLE TO WORK.

JAMES BURROWS.

“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but the companion of fools shall be destroyed.”—PROVERBS xiii. 20.

WHEN concluding the narrative of “George,” I thought I would never again write on so painful a subject; but a request from poor James Burrows, made only sixteen hours before his execution, that I would “make his mournful condition a warning to all young men,” leaves me no choice in the matter; for how could I refuse him anything in that dreadful hour? I felt I could not, and promised to carry out his wish to the best of my ability.

I am no believer in dreams; neither do I despise them. No doubt they are often the result of some physical conditions,—the tangled fragments of mental emotion, or the reflex action of our working hours. It is probable that from this last cause I was greatly troubled in my sleep on the night of August 23rd, 1866, for I had been hoping, during the whole day, that the Home Secretary might possibly grant a reprieve to James,—prolong one life, and save Manchester from the demoralizing effects of a public execution. So deep had been the impression during the night, and so great was my anxiety about the young man, from knowing something of his family before they left Bamford, that in the morning I felt a strong desire to gain admission

to his cell. I knew the difficulties would be great, for the condemned are very properly guarded from unnecessary intrusion.

On approaching the prison, I found crowds of people lounging about, and workmen engaged in fixing strong barriers across the streets. I entered, and requested one of the warders to forward my card to Mr. Thomas Wright. The venerable philanthropist soon made his appearance, accompanied by Mr. Bagshawe, the patient, kind-hearted chaplain of the gaol. They both expressed their joy that I had come, and sent a joint request to the High Sheriff, Sir R. Armitage, for his permission to admit me to see the condemned prisoner.

And here I would mention a few incidents that transpired during the short time I was waiting for the order.

Outside the iron gates, and pressing against the bars, hundreds of very young, ragged, dirty boys and girls were gathered, all of whom ought to have been at work or at school. Such a miserable and pitiable sight I never before beheld ; nor could I help thinking that many in that youthful gathering were candidates for the prison, if not for the gallows, but not from any fault of their own. Poor things ! doubtless many of them were the children of drunken or thoughtless parents.

Whilst looking on this mass of squalid wretchedness, the police began to beat them back to make room for a procession of publicans, who were coming down the steps from the BREWSTER SESSIONS, that had just been held in the courtroom. Here was a junction indeed—the victims and their destroyers. And these crime-manufacturers had been asking an extension of power to carry on their terribly ruinous business ! Before they went out of the gates, they were in

the right place ; and all BREWSTER SESSIONS ought to be held in the New Bailey. If they were, and the wives and children of drunkards had the power of the keys, they would not soon be let out.

The High Sheriff having granted the urgent request of Mr. Bagshawe and Mr. Wright, we all three threaded our way through the gloomy, winding passages, past the grated window and bolted door of many a cell, until we reached the one occupied by James Burrows. Poor lad ! he sat on a square buffet, reading a pictorial copy of Watt's " Divine Songs." The moment we entered he rose, and seemed glad at the return of his two venerable friends.

And here let me describe this unfortunate young man, not yet nineteen years of age. In height he was about five feet ten inches, and stout in proportion. He had glossy black hair, a full face, ruddy cheeks, and fair skin. He was clothed in the felon's dress,—a round jacket, and vest of party colours (like patch-work), coarse woollen trousers, and a narrow black stock round his neck,—yet he looked a handsome, healthy, strong young man. As I gazed at him, and thought that, before noon the following day, his fine frame would be laid in a murderer's grave, I felt what language could never express.

On being introduced to him he took hold of my hand, and for some time held it in silence. But seeing the tears streaming down my face, he heaved a deep sigh and quietly sat down, burying his face in his hands. We all followed his example ; and for a considerable time none of us could speak one word. James again sighed, and, laying his hand on my knee, said,—

"Do you remember, one Sunday, speaking to me and some other young men, who were pigeon-flying, near Thor-

nam lane, and telling us that Sabbath-breaking, dog-running, and pigeon-flying must come to a bad end ?”

“I think I do ; for I have spoken to young men, on the road from Rochdale to Middleton, about bad company, pigeon-flying, and Sabbath-breaking,” I replied.

“Yes, you did ; but we only laughed at you when you were gone, for we were a bad lot. Like and like go together ; and wicked company has brought me to this. Living at an ale-house, going to ale-houses, and bad company have done it all ; and it will do it for more beside me. Oh ! I wish I had taken warning in time.”

James again sighed, and taking the book he had been reading from a small table, he opened it at the nineteenth page. Handing it to me, he folded his hands, and with a trembling voice began :—

“Almighty God, Thy piercing eye
~ Strikes through the shades of night,
And our most secret actions lie
All open to Thy sight.

“There’s not a sin that we commit
Nor wicked word we say,
But in Thy dreadful book ’tis writ,
Against the judgment day.

“And must the crimes that I have done
Be re d and published there ?
Be all exposed before the sun,
While men and angels hear ?

“Lord, at Thy feet ashamed I lie
Upward I dare not look ;
Pardon my sins before I die,
And blot them from Thy book.”

During the repeating of this hymn, James remained seated on the square buffet ; but so intense had his feelings become,

that he now rose and fixed his eyes on the ceiling,—his hands being still clasped, and, with a bursting heart, cried out, in the words of David, recorded in the fifty-first Psalm,—“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” He repeated the entire Psalm, laying great emphasis on the 14th verse:—“Deliver me from *blood-guiltiness*, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness.”

While he was repeating the hymn and psalm, and especially the concluding words, James’s voice seemed to be choking with intense agony. He let his hands fall, and quietly sitting down, with quivering lip said,—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Yes, he did. And what could I do without Him? Then, again springing to his feet, at the top of his voice he cried out, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out:” and, turning quickly round to Mr. Bagshawe, he said, “That is the passage for me,—for poor James! O, when I heard that passage, I grab’d it!—hope came when I first heard that, and I grab’d it!”

On expressing my surprise at his quoting the Scriptures so correctly, and informing him that I had understood from the newspapers that he could neither read nor write, he replied,—

“When I came here I knew nothing but wickedness. I

did once go to the Sunday-school in Bamford, before we moved from there to yon cursed alehouse ; and I also went a short time after we removed, to Thornham school. But I left, and joined bad and idle company, and soon lost all I had learned. Those schools look nice to me now !

“ Lord, how delightful ’tis to see
A whole assembly worship Thee.
At once they sing, at once they pray,
They hear of heaven, and learn the way.”

“ Yes, they learn the way, and if I had remained at the Sunday-school, I should have learned the way too. That is a nice line,—‘ They learn the way ! ’ Then, looking at Mr. Bagshawe and Mr. Wright, he said,—

“ These two dear friends have taught me all I know that is good ; for I knew nothing but wickedness before I came here. I was a wandering sheep. I have learned to read, and to write a little, and to think of my precious soul, since that dreadful day, thirteen weeks last Monday. Had I had a thousandth part of the religion outside these walls that I have learned inside, I should have kept away from wicked companions, and never have come here. But like and like go together ; and, Mr. Ashworth, tell all young men from me, four things :—

1. *To keep the Sabbath-day holy ;*
2. *To go to some place of worship ;*
3. *To keep from the ale-house ; and,*
4. *To keep out of bad and idle company.*

If they do these they will never be imprisoned, transported, or hanged.”

“ What do you mean by thirteen weeks last Monday, James ? ” I asked.

"Mean ! I think I mean enough," he replied. "It was the day poor John Brennan was murdered ! I wonder God did not strike me dead that day, and send me to hell ; and I do thank Him that he did not."

"And how could you do such a deed, James, for I hear you have confessed you did it."

"Do it ! I wonder now how I could do it. When a man once begins to serve Satan, he does not know what he will make him do. But I have been led on by bad companions, and by one more wicked than the rest, who was always bragging of what he had done. I thought I would be as clever as him. I had nothing against Brennan, poor man, but I would have his money. After I had done the deed, the man that has been a curse to me had seven shillings and sixpence of the money,—five shillings of which went to pay off an ale-score he owed.

Here James's feelings so overpowered him that he rose, exclaiming,—

"What will become of John Brennan's poor wife and children ! If I had any money I would leave it all to them. Mr. Ashworth, can you get them something?"

I promised I would send what I could, and this seemed to give him some little comfort.

Let it not be supposed that I am one of those who can weep for the criminal, and forget the victim of his crimes ; and wring my hands over the felon, and forget his foul deeds. Murder is murder, whether it be *one* that makes the villain, or *thousands* that make the hero. I hope mankind will ever look on the man of blood with horror. James Burrows was a great sinner, but he had been greatly sinned against. I shall not say one word about his parents or his family ; James requested that I would not, and they have had trouble

enough. But character is often transmitted from parents to children, and this fact ought to be more generally recognized than it is. There is as much difference in the natural dispositions of men as in the breed of horses or dogs; and while the propensity to do evil is in all, some *inherit* it more than others. Surrounding circumstances, too, often favour and even force its strong development, as in the case of James Burrows. Surely some sympathy may be shown for such, and some pity be legitimately bestowed on them. The sons and daughters of truly religious parents little know how much they have to be thankful for, encircled from childhood, as they have been, with good example, tenderness, love, and favorable influences. They are sheltered from those fierce temptations that might have been their utter destruction, body and soul. For nothing but Divine grace can restrain some characters; and the old Lancashire minister and martyr, John Bradford, was right, when, seeing evil-doers on the way to execution, he exclaimed, "But for the grace of God, there goes John Bradford!"—and many more may say the same.

Some have said, "Swing the wretch off, and have done with him, for he richly deserves it!" Few, very few, have had what they deserve; and I think that no man who knows his own heart would ever utter such unfeeling words. No; the good man mourns over these dreadful evidences of fallen humanity; but his very sorrow purifies his soul, and nerves him for greater good. The field of labour widens before him, and he sees he must still work on. Yes, brothers and sisters in the Lord's vineyard, work on! No one can tell how many scaffolds you have prevented being erected. Of one thing you may rest well assured, that you can never labour in vain IN THE LORD.

Just when I had promised James that the widow and children of his victim should not be forgotten, whether from the sound of a bell, or some other cause, he knew it was four o'clock ; and, with a deep sigh, said,—

“ Sixteen hours ; sixteen hours, and then ! ”

James knew that he could not live more than sixteen hours, for he neither expected nor wished for a reprieve. He frequently said he ought to die for his great crime, and he had a fear of again falling into bad company, either in prison or out, and his mind was entirely fixed on things eternal. Humanly speaking, he had sixteen hours to live ; but how uncertain is human life ! A young man, talking about the execution to one of his fellow-workmen, said,—“ I will work overtime to-day, for I am going to see Burrows hanged on Saturday.” But in six hours the young man's dead body lay waiting the coroner's inquest ! Immediately after he had spoken the words, he fell from the top of a building in Bamford, and was killed on the spot. He went to his account before the man he was going to see executed ? So uncertain is human life ; and no man is wise who is not prepared for this uncertainty.

Seeing I was about to leave, James looked me in the face. I understood that look, and said,—“ Yes, James, I will pray with you.” James now loved prayer, and had prayed with his father, mother, and sister, when they visited him in prison. We all four knelt down,—James first. He knelt at a small table, his elbows resting upon it, with his hands clasped, and his face lifted towards the top of the cell. For a short time we knelt in silence ; for my utterance was choked, and I felt that silence was more eloquent than words. I had prayed, in my feeble way, under many varied circumstances, with almost every variety of character, but never

with a fellow-sinner within sixteen hours of his execution. Oh, how weak were words at that moment, and how my heart yearned for power to plead with the Friend of sinners on behalf of the poor doomed one that knelt sobbing by my side !

After prayer, we all rose up except James, who still remained with clasped and uplifted hands and closed eyes, repeating his favourite promise,—“ Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out ;” and, in the anguish of his spirit, he cried out,—“ Yes, Lord, I come ! Jesus, I come ! O, I come, I come !

‘ Just as I am—without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

‘ Just as I am—and waiting not
To rid my soul of some dark blot ;
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.

‘ Just as I am—though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within, and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come.’ ”

With a power and earnestness I never before witnessed, he repeated the whole of that beautiful, broken-hearted sinner's hymn, before he rose from his knees ! I need not say how affecting was the scene.

Another favourite hymn he constantly repeated was,—

“ Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee.”

Referring to it he remarked to the chaplain, “ Sir, if I were as near to God now, as I was far from him when I came into this prison, I am very near him this moment.”

On taking my leave, he again requested me to speak to young men, and warn them of bad company and Sabbath-breaking. He also desired to make me some present, and looking round the cell, he took from the small table the pictorial copy of Watt's Hymns he was reading when we entered, turned down the leaf at the lines, "Almighty God, Thy piercing eye." The chaplain, Mr. Bagshawe, at our joint request, wrote the inscription, and Mr. Wright witnessed it. The words are,—

"Presented to Mr. JOHN ASHWORTH, of Rochdale, in the cell of the New Bailey, Salford, by James Burrows, on the 24th of August, 1866—the day before his execution.

(Signed)

"JAMES BURROWS."

I now took leave of the doomed young man, but could not, during the whole night, forget the sad interview, and in the morning, at the moment I believed he would be ascending the scaffold, we read at family prayer his favourite 51st Psalm, and knelt down, not forgetting poor James.

Mr. Bagshawe, the chaplain, kindly sent me the following particulars of his last hours,—

"You saw him in the afternoon of the last entire day he lived; I left him about eleven in the evening, returning about six in the morning. He was glad to see me, and we at once began to talk about what was the nearest his heart,—those divine and living truths that live and abide for ever. We then knelt down before that God, at whose bar James would in two hours appear. He was very calm and humble; not a word or action unbecoming. He said,—

" 'I could shed tears day and night, but that would not save me. Christ only can save me. I have heard about

persons dying 'game,' but I hope to do nothing foolish. It is not what man may think, but God thinks, that concerns me now.'

"The strange, sickening sounds, arising from the surging thousands outside the prison walls, we heard very plainly, and the noise was truly dreadful. I feared its effect on James, but it did not move him. Seven o'clock struck, and he again fervently prayed in the words of the 61st Psalm, and all knelt down, Mr. Wright engaged in prayer.

"At twenty minutes to eight, the High Sheriff, Under Sheriff, the Mayor of Salford, the Governor of the prison, and the hangman, came into the cell. The Under Sheriff asked James if he had any communication to make. At his request I produced a paper he had signed, acknowledging his guilt, and read it aloud. He then repeated the Confession, and the Collect for the 21st Sunday after Trinity with such earnestness that many, and even Calcraft, the hangman, shed tears. After he was bound, the procession moved, and I read the service,—I am the resurrection and the life,' &c.

"Through the long dark cell-yard, and up to the foot of the gallows, Burrows seemed absorbed in repeating, without an omission, the whole of the 51st Psalm. The procession paused, and he emphatically uttered the Lord's prayer, once more, and the entire hymn, 'Just as I am,' with much energy. I then closed the service, and my work being done, took leave of him. Ere I reached my room I heard the heavy thud of the falling floor of the scaffold, and all was soon over."

I thank Mr. Bagshawe for this account of the last moments of poor James, and, like him, would draw a veil over the scene on the scaffold ;—that scene which twenty thousand

upturned faces beheld, but which I have no wish to describe. A coffin had been provided, and a grave was in readiness, and, in a few hours, the body of the victim of bad companions was buried in that grave. As I stood beside it, I remembered standing over the graves of those who had been executed at Newgate, London, and on the mounds under the willows, in Kirkdale, Liverpool. Now I stood on the one, the first, and I hope the last, in this melancholy spot, and as I stood, I again felt how terribly true are the words of the Holy Book. Thousands of young men and young women, who, by sin in its various forms, are cut down in the midst of their years, or left to linger out a life of suffering and sorrow, worse than death, could, with a voice loud as the roar of the raging storm, bear their testimony to the truth of these words : " HE THAT WALKETH WITH WISE MEN SHALL BE WISE, BUT THE COMPANION OF FOOLS SHALL BE DESTROYED."



JOHN AND MARY.

THERE is something very impressive, and if seen aright, profitable and instructive, in marking time's silent power. Ancient nations and ancient cities,—halls and palaces of ancient song, moulder into ruin, and are numbered with the things that were. The old tree, and the old house, sacred from many endearing associations, crumble into dust, and succeeding ages know them only by tradition. But nowhere is the touch of time's fatal finger seen and felt so distinctly as in the gaps made amongst our relations and friends, or in the changes in schools and congregations :—here his doings are often painfully visible, and annual records have to tell of their death. The “Chapel for the Destitute” shares largely in these changes, for, in proportion to our numbers, we have many aged and infirm people; and this year two of these ancient ones, amongst others, have fallen from our ranks—old John, and old Mary his wife. One is dead, and the other is dying; and two more primitive creatures it would, perhaps, be difficult to find.

Old John was small in stature, had thin grey hair, carried his head on one side, walked with a short, quick step, and leant heavily on a stout hazel stick. Mary, like her husband, was short in stature, had grey locks, very thin in flesh, and had a sharp nose. She wore a well-washed printed dress of very ancient pattern, but no crinoline; a scuttle-shaped bonnet, a white linen cap, with a large border round her small

face. In their later days they were so infirm that they had to depend on friends to help them up the steps of the chapel ; and, when they made their appearance, persons sitting in the aisles rose to make way for the feeble couple to reach their accustomed place amongst the aged worshippers near the platform.

John, in his younger days, had been a very hard-working man. For more than thirty years he had been a "slubber" in a woollen mill, and during the whole of that time he had never once entered a place of worship, except at a funeral. Like thousands, John, during these thirty years, lived very much like a donkey—eating, working, sleeping, drinking ; only the donkey never drank until it tumbled into the gutter, which John often did. But he adopted one plan which drunkards might imitate to advantage,—he got drunk at the public-house nearest his own home ; for he said drink was so bad to carry, that he did not like to carry it far. His little wife had not only a sharp nose, but a sharp tongue ; and the sound of that tongue at the door of the drinking-house, was a signal for John to finish his cup. Some wives fetch their drinking husbands home when they want to taste a little themselves ; but Mary would never touch a drop, nor would she prop him up by taking hold of his arm when going home, for she said people could not tell which was the tipsy one. If he fell, he fell, and she would give a long or a short lecture until he could gather up his legs and walk. Her speeches on these occasions did not vary much. When he tumbled she would say,—

"There—down again, down again ! Thou should bring the publican with thee to help thee up ; thou hast bought his fine wife another yard of ribbon for her fine cap, and when thou buys her another yard thou wilt roll in the mud again.

I wonder what I was doing when I wed thee ; I wish it was to do again. Get up, this minute ; get up !”

John took his wife's scolding very patiently ; he would scramble to his feet, balance himself, and make another trial. He thought as much of his little wife as such characters generally do, and that is not saying much. For a man to pretend to love his wife, when he leaves her fretting, sorrowing, lonely, and often weeping because he is degrading and disgracing both her and himself, and spending the money that she needs for the requirements of the house,—for such a man to pretend to love his wife or children is downright hypocrisy : a man is what he *does*, not what he *says*. But there was one good thing about John—he never neglected his work for drink. He would toil hard, at his toiling business, during the week, and have a short fuddle on the Saturday evening, and a longer one on the Sunday. His careful, plodding wife did the best she could ; she kept their cottage clean, had a tidy fireside, a well-polished set of mahogany drawers, and the stockings well mended.

But what a life was this for two immortal beings, made in God's image, made capable of the highest enjoyments—sleeping, eating, working, merely dragging on an existence, and nothing more !—utter strangers to those higher and sublimer thoughts arising from intellectual aspirations ; or those still grander and more enduring spiritual emotions springing from union and communion with the Fountain of purity and bliss. They lived as many live,—with no joyful greetings for the return of the blessed Sabbath morn ; no longing for the sweet period mercifully given for the gathering of the sons and daughters of toil to those earthly sanctuaries emblematic of heavenly mansions. The cheerful intermingling of the followers of the Lamb, as they gathered

from hill and dell round their various altars on the Lord's day, never found John or Mary joining in their happy assemblies. No ; nor did they in their cottago home even kneel together in prayer, or open the pages of the Book of life. They lived without God and without hope, consequently without joy and without peace ; for let the world say what it will,—

Solid joys and lasting pleasures
None but Christians ever know.

Mary, in after life, when speaking of this long, miserable, blank period, often said,—

“ We lived like pigs, and worse than pigs, though we were thought to be as good as our neighbours. Many of them died in ignorance and sin, and I can never tell how it was that God spared our John and me ; but there was not the same chance of knowing things then that there is now, and I think the poor were less cared for. There was not so many churches, schools, and chapels. Therẽ were one place of worship about two miles from where we lived, but the parson never went to see after any of us, except when we had a child christened ; for we always brewed a peck of malt at a christening, and invited the parson to come ; yet he was a very decent man, taking him altogether, for I never heard tell of him being drunk, though he liked a drop ; but I think teetotal parsons are the safest, for then they can say,—‘ Do as I do,’ and folks will take more notice of what they say.”

Mary's opinion may or may not be endorsed by all, but in one thing she was right,—churches, chapels, and schools have greatly multiplied, and the privileges of this day are immeasurably beyond what they were fifty years since. Old people then were ignorant of the simplest principles of

Christianity, and often showed their ignorance to an amazing degree. I know something of the old minister to whom Mary referred, and have often been to the church or chapel where he officiated for many years. One hot summer morning, as this minister was quietly wending his way up the rising ground leading to the church, in company with an old man, looking at the hard, cracked ground, and the brown, parched fields, he said to his aged friend,—

“James, we must have prayers for rain to day.”

James stood still, looked up at the sky, then at the waving branches of the trees, and quietly replied,—

“It won’t do, minister; it will be of no use. You might as well whistle while the wind is where it is.”

Foolish as was the reply, and strange as such ignorance may seem to us now, let us remember it is through our schools, and especially our Sunday-schools, that we have been led to think differently; for now almost every child taught there could tell that old man that He who created the winds holds those winds in His hands, and both winds and clouds obey Him. We live in a glorious day, and we have glorious privileges, at least in this country. He that is a fool now in things sacred and divine, is a fool because he will be a fool; but let him know, that to whom much is given, of him will much be required.

My first acquaintance with old John and Mary, arose from seeing them at the chapel. Many have heard Mary tell of the first time she came. When repeating the story she would say:—

“I was wandering about in the streets one Sunday evening and seeing a card at the door inviting all poor people that attended no other place of worship, I stood still and read it, saying to myself,—Chapel for the Destitute! Chapel

for the Destitute ! this is a new shop, and I think it is the shop for me, for I am destitute enough in all conscience, and I will see if they will let me in. I went in and saw scores as poor as myself, and when they rose up and all began to sing, I began to cry. I never was so affected in my life. The hymn was,

Come, let us join our cheerful songs,
With angels round the throne.

“ After singing, the minister began to read out of the Bible the thirteenth chapter of Luke. I shall never forget that chapter. When he was reading that part which said, ‘ Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish,’ I thought well I have done some things which I had better not have done, but I am not as bad as some that are here by a long way. But when he came to that part which says, ‘ Strive to enter in at the straight gate,’ he stopped, and, looking at us all, he said, ‘ How many present are doing what Christ here commands, striving ? There is a time when we may enter the way to heaven, and a time when we cannot ; when the door is shut we may strive, but then we shall strive in vain.’ I felt very strange while he was reading and speaking. I am not striving, I thought, nor is our John, and if heaven’s door is shut on us it will be a very sad thing.

“ Before I came out of that place that night, I began to think I was as bad as any one in it. I went home and told our John all about the chapel and what I had heard, and I said to him, I can understand you man every word he says ; he neither talks about Jews nor Gentiles, but about Jesus Christ coming to seek and save lost sinners ; that we are all sinners, and that Christ died to save us all, and that, except we repent and receive this salvation, the door will be shut, and we shall perish.

"I was in good earnest while I was telling our John, and was vexed to see that he did not seem to care ; but I said, ' If I live until next Sunday I shall go to yon place again, and thou shalt go with me.' "

Mary did not succeed in persuading John to come the following Sunday, nor the Sunday following that ; but she talked so much about the chapel, telling her husband all she could remember about the reading and sermons, and trying to induce him by kind words to make a promise to go with her, that at last he consented. She was so much afraid he would break his promise, that she got Matthew Shepherd, an old man in the neighbourhood, to call a little before the service time and encourage her husband to go. Between them they succeeded, and all three set out together. Mary took good care that her partner got as near to the preacher as possible, on account of his slight deafness, and two more attentive hearers could not be found in our congregation that evening.

As they were returning home after the service, Mary asked John how he liked it, and if it was not true that they had been living like pigs.

"Well, I do not think I shall go again," replied John.

"Why?" asked his wife in great alarm.

"Well, I don't like to be made uneasy, and I have felt very much so to-night ; if what we heard be true, I have been wrong a long time."

"It is true, John, and we have both been living as if we had no souls, and it is quite time we began to cry for mercy, if it be not too late ; and I do hope God will pardon us both, for I feel I cannot do as I am."

I was glad when I heard of the conversation of the old couple, but was still more pleased when I was informed that

they had begun to pray together in their humble cellar, and to ask others to pray with them. The Spirit of God had wounded their consciences and troubled their souls, and is it not a mercy when sinners, high or low, rich or poor, are troubled on account of their sins? It is a fearful thing when a man is so hardened in his crimes that he is past feeling. One of the kings of France, Louis XIV., said to Fenelon, "When I hear some men preach I am pleased, and with others I am edified; but when I hear you I am miserable and unhappy, and feel my sins." "Thank God for that," said Fenelon, "for if there be no feeling of need, there will be no crying for help," Fenelon was right. "God be merciful to me a sinner!" is and ever will be, the stereotyped cry of every contrite spirit, and that cry from a breaking heart ever was and ever will be heard.

At the request of John and Mary, a part of our company of the "Destitute" went weekly to hold a prayer-meeting in their cellar, in Falinge-road, and glad the old people were to receive them, for one of the true signs of either penitence or pardon is the love of prayer,—not simply praying, but loving to pray. I well remember attending one of these devotional gatherings. The company that day consisted of John and Mary, Matthew Shepherd, John Hamer, an old blind man, a street sweeper we called Ben, a half-wit called Robert, and several others.

This Robert, or, as he is more frequently called, "Bobby," is a well-known imbecile, about forty years of age. He has small, deep-sunk eyes, near to each other, a low forehead, a strange, vacant look, and is very harmless. He regularly attends some place of worship, knows nothing about texts, but can always tell when it is twelve o'clock. He seems to harken to all that is said, but if the preacher goes beyond

the time, Bobby leaves him, and quietly walks out of the chapel. There is not one spark of intelligence in his countenance, but he can be moved to joy by a Sunday-school procession, a tea-party, or the singing of children ; and if the preacher should mention Canaan, happy land, realms of the blest, glory, heaven, or Jesus, then he clasps his hands, smiles, and looks up, and seems truly happy ; and he was happy that night.

I have been in many prayer-meetings, and heard many strains of humble and exalted eloquence, but none more memorable than that evening in that cellar, amongst those simple-hearted worshippers. Old John prayed first, saying, after he had repeated the Lord's prayer,—

“O Lord, I thank thee for Thy goodness to me and our Mary. We had nearly been lost, and should have been, but Christ Jesus saved us. What a mercy ! how good Thou art, O Lord. Help us all to be good, and to praise Thee. Amen.”

Mary, very modestly and tremblingly, prayed after her husband, saying,—

“Lord, Thou knowest what I want better than I can tell Thee, for I feel afraid to pray when so many are here. I can pray the best when our John and me are with our two selves ; but Thou knows I can just say what Peter said, ‘Thou knows all things, Thou knows I love Thee.’ And I wish I could love Thee more, for Thou hast done wonderful things for all of us, and me especially, for once I was blind but now I see. Amen.”

After singing a verse, we again kneeled down, and old Matthew, always simple and earnest in prayer, said,—

“O Lord, help me, and help me to pray. I have had hard work to get down on my knees, for old age is making my

joints very stiff. I know what that passage of Thy word means now, better than ever I did before,—the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. I find I am getting very weak, but I love Thee, Lord, this very minute as much as ever I did in my life, and I think more; and if these old limbs are soon to tumble into the grave, well, it is all right, for I can truly say that if my heart and flesh faileth, ‘Thou art the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.’ But I have one request to make, Lord; and oh! I do wish Thou would grant it before I die. Yon wicked son of mine, I think he gets more wicked every day; I am sometimes ready to wish he was either mended or ended. O that I could but see him converted, then I think I could die any minute. I would then say, with old Simeon,—‘Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.’ And now, Lord, look at us all at Thy feet in mercy; Thou hast done great things for old John and Mary, for which I believe they are glad; and they may well be glad, for they have had a narrow escape; the door had been near shut. And, Lord, bless old blind John Hamer; I think sometimes thou hast perhaps made him blind to save his soul, for he thinks more about his soul now than he did when he could see. David said, before he was afflicted he went astray, and so have scores done besides David. Lord, bless us all, and make us what thou would have us to be at any price, for it will be the best for us in the end, and the end will soon come, and then I hope we shall all meet in heaven. Amen.”

While old Matthew was praying, Ben, the street-sweeper, a fine, healthy, middle-aged man, was much affected, and, with a tremulous voice, said in his prayer,—

“O Lord, when I see these poor old creatures, and think I may very likely live to be as old as they are, I wonder

whether I shall have grace to keep me faithful and patient, for I am sure I shall need it then. Well, the promise is, that as our day is so shall our strength be, and that will do both for me and them. Help us all to have our lamps trimmed; for to know they are trimmed it will make us happy, whether the Bridegroom comes soon or late. Amen."

It was well for Benjamin that his lamp was trimmed, for, in fourteen days after he offered that prayer, he was laid in his grave, though the most likely for a long life of any present at that meeting.

I repeat the simple prayers of these illiterate people, to show how their hearts were imbued with the love of God. The intelligent educated Christian, when bowing before his Maker in the social means of grace, will necessarily clothe his thoughts and desires in more elegant language; but it does not follow that he gets nearer to the throne of grace. Simplicity in prayer is taught us by Him who is the medium of all effectual prayer; and if the prayer of these simple people appear in the eyes of some to be irreverent, my experience amongst many such has convinced me that this is more in appearance than in truth.

In these cellar prayer-meetings, a scene both painful and pleasing was often witnessed. Feeble and infirm as old John was, he would kneel down during the devotion. No persuasion could induce him to remain standing or seated; for he had a strong conviction that in prayer he ought to bow down both soul and body. But after prayer he had always to be assisted to rise. His wife, the moment she rose, would walk across the floor, take hold of his arm, and help him to his feet. In their younger years she could scold him, and refuse him the helping hand, when he lay drunk in the

ditch ; but now, with tears of thankfulness, she supports his trembling limbs,—raising him up, and placing him in his chair.

Great care was taken that John and Mary should not be without food, clothing, or attendance. They had a small allowance from the parish-funds, and many kind friends added to their comforts by daily seeing to their personal wants and requirements.

But the time was now come when their increased infirmities made it impossible for them longer to attend their “blessed chapel,” as they called it. Old Matthew and others had brought them there and taken them back, as long as they could. On my last visit, Mary expressed a conviction that her time was short, and spoke with remarkable calmness of her approaching end. Her only concern was about leaving her old partner behind, and she frequently desired that, if it was God’s will, they might both be buried on the same day. But this desire was not granted, for on the morning of the 27th of February, 1866, in the seventy-seventh year of her age, her last lingering whisper died on her tongue, and that last whisper was,—“Mercy’s free.”

Mary now lies buried in the free ground in the Rochdale Cemetery, and John’s days are fast drawing to a close. His mind often wanders, and then he forgets that his aged partner is gone. He asks her to sing for him ; he talks to her about the chapel, and wonders how soon old Matthew will call for him ; tells her if no one calls for him he will try to go himself, and wants to know how it is she never speaks to him now. Because she does not answer he weeps, and begs her to speak to him just once more. Much of his time he sleeps, but during his conscious hours his mind

is fixed on eternal things. He prays for the people at the "Destitute," prays for all those who go to visit the sick and poor, and prays that he may soon be taken to heaven. Soon that prayer will be heard ; and I believe that, when the pages are read in the Lamb's Book of Life, on these pages will be found the names of JOHN AND MARY.



A SAD STORY

AGES to come will hear with sadness and sorrow of the mournful catastrophe, involving the instant destruction of over three hundred men and boys, at Barnsley, in Yorkshire, on the 12th day of December, 1866. And the day following, at Tunstall, in Staffordshire, one fearful and fatal explosion killed over one hundred of its husbands, brothers, and sons, calling forth the shrieks and heart-rending agony of its mothers, widows, and orphans. At the Land Hill mines, in February, 1857, one hundred and eighty-nine were killed ; and at the Hartley colliery, in January, 1862, two hundred and nine perished. All these are, indeed, fearful in the immense sacrifice of life ; but Barnsley exceeds all colliery explosions on record, in this or any other land.

The principal newspapers contained short telegraphic accounts of this deplorable accident, on the morning of the 13th, and the Queen telegraphed from Windsor anxiously requesting information, for she could always weep with those that weep. And when, on the 14th, full particulars were given, the whole country felt the shock. I had been on a distant journey, and while returning, read the account with painful interest, but saw the first mournful evidence of what had happened at the Guide Bridge Junction. There four middle-aged persons, evidently colliers, were waiting at the station for the train that would take them near the fatal

mine. Deep sorrow on each countenance, and eyes red with weeping, plainly told a sad tale. Wishing to converse with them, I, in as kindly a tone as possible, said,—

“I suppose you are going to Barnsley, my dear friends?”

“Yes, sir; we are all on a sorrowful errand,” was the reply.

“Have you some relatives among those that are lost?” I asked.

“We have each a son killed!”

This painful answer accompanied by a flood of tears, made me almost regret having spoken to them on the subject, and I felt I could not ask any more questions.

There is a melancholy interest in visiting scenes memorable from some sad events. No spot in all the parks and squares in London arrests the mind, or calls forth so many associations, as the few square yards in Smithfield, where the martyrs for the truth bravely met their fate. Oxford boasts many places sacred to the good and brave, but none to compare with the place where Ridley and Latimer triumphed in death. The chronicles of our sea-girt shores contain many accounts of fatal rocks and shoals, but none more to be remembered than the spot that wrecked the “Royal Charter;” and now the inhabitants of Yorkshire, and visitors, will ever regard with mournful interest this deep, dark sepulchre, containing three hundred unburied dead.

And is not this right? Is it not well for the living that we are not indifferent to the memory of the dead? Sad thoughts are often the best thoughts; and to mourn on the spot where others have been made to mourn, draws nearer our sympathies and binds humanity in closer bonds. The

house of mourning is sometimes better than the house of feasting.

Such were my thoughts, and such my experience, on the day I wended my way through Barnsley to the Ardsley Oaks Colliery, the scene of the terrible explosion. On nearing the place, I found the approach to the pit's mouth guarded by boards, rails, iron ropes, and policemen. On the boards were large placards, with the word, "dangerous." Seeking a shelter from the cold, bleak wind, behind a low stone office near the pit, I watched, with feelings not to be described, the dense volumes of dun and dark smoke rolling from the hot, fiery depths, as from a great burning furnace. But, O! the thought—the sickening, appalling thought—that down that flaming gulf were the bodies of three hundred human beings, the husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons of heart-broken wives, mothers, sisters, and children, who were wringing their hands in the wildness of grief, agony, and despair.

While silently standing and sorrowfully looking on the scene, I was joined by several miners who had relatives and friends in the pit. Some of them had been present on the day of the explosion, and could tell of the fearful events. They said that it being "making-up" day, more men were in the mine than usual; and a terrible making-up day it was.

It was about half-past one on the 12th, when a terrific booming, followed by a tremendous rush of roaring air, black smoke, and broken timber, belched forth from the shaft. The convulsion shook the whole country, as if rent by a mighty earthquake. Immediately the inhabitants, in frantic terror, came running from all parts,—mostly women and children,—screaming as if bereft of reason, wildly asking for husbands and fathers. And well they might, for

there were one hundred and thirty husbands and fathers down the roaring pit. These were followed by long lines of people running in from more distant parts, and soon the mouth of the pit was surrounded by crowds breathless with excitement. After the stunning effects of the awful explosion had a little subsided, a cry arose, "Can nothing be done?—can nothing be done?—let us go down and save the poor men if possible!" Volunteers for the perilous undertaking instantly presented themselves, even more than required; and down the sulphureous deep went a number of as brave men as ever existed. Eighteen were found alive near the bottom, but so blackened, burned, and mangled, that, on reaching the top, nearly all expired in great agony.

James Barker, one of those noble and brave volunteers, who had formerly worked in the mine, in a letter to me, gives the following sad story of his terrible eleven hours work, in bringing out the dead. His words are:—

"When we got to the bottom, the scene there was indescribable,—death and horror on every side. O how dreadful! But the thought of having a father and three brothers in the dismal mine, besides many comrades, drove all fear from my mind; so, without asking if there was any danger, I asked where my father and brothers were working. The place being named, off I went. O! how dreadful was the smell of sulphur, and the sight was heart-rending. Dead bodies of men, boys, and horses, lay on every side; but, with my soul lifted up to heaven in yearning prayer for help, on I went to seek for the living, yet almost without hope of finding any. I met with one of the volunteers, a bottom-steward, who had a son in the mine; we went together, through smoke and damp, over fallen roof and broken timber, with beating heart and listening ear for the voice of a com-

rade, or anything to show the sign of life. But all was still as death. Still we went on and on, the smoke getting thicker and thicker, and nothing but death and destruction all around, but we were forced to return.

“When we got away, we saw the fire burning in the distance, near the road we had to pass, and we put it out to save our lives. This done we got to the bottom of the pit, almost dead ourselves with the sulphur and fiery damp. They brought us brandy and rum to revive us, but I had nothing but water. Being a total abstainer, and believing, at that time especially, that water was better and safer than spirits, I took nothing else all the eleven hours I was in those dismal mines, and I was in all the worst places. I found a small tin bottle, filled it with water, fastened it to my belt, and being ordered along with another man, to go with and take charge of other four explorers, we again went back to seek for my father and brothers. We got three hundred yards further this time, but again we met with the black damp. We had only about three hundred yards further to go, but we were forced to stop. I cannot express my feelings at this time, but I still prayed to God for help. After resting awhile we tried again but could not go. Two went back to fetch some sheeting to take the fresh air with us, and we waited until they returned. While waiting, we shouted and listened, but no response,—all was painfully still. We had not been waiting long before the air began to waver : then all was as if life was put into everything, for all was on the move. Then came a rush of air that staggered us all, and brought the black damp over us. I got my cap in my mouth to keep it out, but it had nearly choked me. I fell down, and after a time feeling a little better, I got to my feet and ran for my life. I did not run far before

I got into the fresh air ; here I stopped and called for my companions to come on. I again prayed to God to have mercy and help me, and I felt he answered my prayer, or I should now have been numbered among the dead. It was a fearful struggle,—so dreadful that I cannot describe it.

“ We again got to the bottom of the shaft ; my comrades then left me and went up to the top. Brandy and rum were again offered me, but still I would not take any, but kept to water, thinking it preferable to spirits. Feeling I could not leave my father and brothers in the mine, I got another man to go with me to seek for them. Strengthened by the hand of my God, we got three hundred yards further up than before ; but here we had to stop,—sulphur, smoke, and black damp, hot as a furnace. We lay down, hearkening, but still no sound. O ! where was my father ? where my brothers ? and how was my poor mother ? Lord, help my poor, poor mother ! These were my cries, nor could I help it.

“ On returning back we met the master and the engineers ; they wanted to know what we had seen. We all tried to explore further, but were driven back to the bottom of the pit. Some wished me to go and see how my mother was ; but I durst not see her, so I did not go up. I again filled my bottle with water, again prayed for help, and again set out. This time I got one thousand yards. O ! the sights I had to pass ; some poor creatures had not a rag left on their bodies ; there were fifteen in one lot, all dead. Some of our company began to carry them out ; but my anxiety to find my father and brothers overcame everything. I had been down nine hours, and could not have endured what I did but for Divine help. On going further I saw

another and another of the slain. Then came thirty-seven all in one lot ! This was a sickening and dreadful sight ; the lamp that I held seemed as if it were mourning ;—it was just like a little speck. My three brothers were amongst this lot, all dead, cold, and stiff. O that one of them could have spoken to me !

“ Thomas lay on his back ; about two yards further was Andrew, laid on his face ; William was next, poor lad, also lying on his face,—these two lay together. I cried out,—“ O ! what must I do,—what must I do ? O my mother ! my dear, dear mother ! what will she do when she gets to know the worst ! I fell on my knees and prayed to God that He would support my mother, strengthen her faith, and sustain her.

“ I believed He had taken my father and brothers all to Himself, or I think I should have died on the spot. When sufficient help came, one after another were borne away to near the bottom of the shaft. My strength was now done, I was taken up the pit, about half-past two in the morning. Agreeing with some others to go down again at nine, I set off home. And now came the grief,—how could I tell my mother the truth ? After telling her, my spirits seemed to die away, and I lay down completely exhausted. But rest I could not, so long as my father and brothers were under ground. I returned again to the pit, went down, brought up my brothers, got them home, and had them laid out. My dear mother was stupefied and helpless. I requested her to let me go again and try to recover my father ; she made no answer. I was putting on my cap to go down again, when the second terrible explosion went off. O ! how

I thanked God for this wonderful deliverance,—it was all His goodness. A few moments more and I should have been killed. .

“Yours very truly,

“JAMES BARKER.”

It is scarcely possible to conceive anything more truly dreadful than this simple narrative.

When the second appalling explosion, reverberating like thunder, burst forth, followed again by the belching of dense volumes of smoke, and shivered timber from the two shafts, it produced the most bewildering effect. Another rush was made to the sad scene of this double disaster, and the most intense excitement prevailed. Again sorrowing relatives ran wildly about, their grief breaking out anew; for now all hope of one being saved was dashed to the ground; the men about the pit sat down in horror and stupefaction, or wept like children, for twenty-six more lives were now sacrificed. (There were twenty-seven in the pit, but one miraculously escaped.) And these twenty-six were the brave, courageous, generous volunteers that had gone down to seek and save their fellow-men! This second direful catastrophe was felt to be a calamity indeed; and the gloomy intelligence hung like a black cloud over the whole country.

There is something truly dreadful when, in the midst of the ocean's rolling, rising billows, and raging, roaring storm, to see the blue-light shot up into the riven clouds telling of a ship in distress; or the cry of the mariner, amidst the howling blast, when his vessel is tossed among the breakers. But when a band of fearless hearts man the life-boat, and push out into the wild, foaming deep, with the express object of saving the perishing, and are themselves engulfed

in a watery grave, a still more intense and painful feeling is excited. Such were the men, and such the object, and such was the fate of those six-and-twenty heroes, the last who perished in this fearful calamity.

But had they perished?—had these men of science and of experience, these engineers, masters, men of position, perished?—was there no hope? Some thought there was, and the cage was slowly lowered to the bottom, and, after a short pause, amidst inexpressible excitement, slowly drawn again to the top. *But it was empty!* the fiery foe had slain them all.

“ The strife is o’er ; death’s seal is set,
On ashy lips and marble brow.”

Explosion after explosion followed, which too plainly told that the mines were burning. Practical engineers advised the filling up of the pits to extinguish the flames ; tens of thousands of tons of earth were poured down the shafts, and now Ardsley Oaks is one of the world’s great sepulchres.

On leaving this never-to-be-forgotten spot, I met three young women, whose sad countenances plainly told they were amongst the sufferers. All their husbands were amongst the dead, and still in the mines ; they were the widows of three brothers, and they requested I would call to see their mother-in-law, Mrs. Winter, in Baker Street, who had five sons all dead in the burning pit. I felt great reluctance to intrude on the aged creature’s hopeless sorrow, and yet I had a wish to comply with the request. I went to the wrong door, the house of a person named Evans, who, with swollen eyes and quivering lip, told me her husband and son were amongst the killed. On entering the house of Mrs. Winter, I found the aged mourner sitting in her arm-chair, near the fire. For several weeks she had been very

poorly. At her desire I sat down beside her, but felt that no words of mine could meet her case. Taking hold of her feeble hand, I said,—

“I have called to see you, Mrs. Winter, at the request of your daughters-in-law.”

“Did you know any of my sons?” she asked.

“No; I am a stranger,” I replied, “and am just returned from the pit.”

“Do you think there is any hope that any of them will be saved?”

“I fear not; but I hope you will again see them all in heaven.”

“Thank you—thank you; for that hope is all that is now left me. Oh! my John, Thomas, Duncan, Joseph, William,—shall I meet you there? Ah! my dear William, he was my youngest—only eighteen; and that morning, knowing I was poorly, he brought my breakfast to my bedside, and said,—‘Mother, is there anything I can do for you, before I go? Ah! he thought well of his mother, and he would have done anything for me. I had very little trouble with any of my lads. Whatever must I do now?’

“Well, my aged sister, there is only one hand that can bind up the broken heart. He knows your heavy sorrows, and He only can sustain you now, and I believe he will.”

Before leaving the bereaved creature, I hired a neighbour to keep her company, night and day, for a month, as she feared being alone, for now she was the only person left in the house.

My next call was on the mother of James Barker; the dear mother for whom he prayed when he found his three brothers amongst the dead. She resided at No. 3, Ash Row, Hoyle Mill. In this row of stone buildings, there are thirty

dwellings, and, sad to relate, twenty-eight out of the thirty had one or more of the family amongst the dead. The angel of death had indeed visited these homes, and a great cry, like the cry of Egypt, had gone up to heaven. Groups of children, many of them too young to understand their loss, were playing about the doors. One of these often asked, "Mother, when will father come home." Others, a little older, looked on in silence. These dear creatures

Would no more run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knee the envied kiss to share.

I found Mrs. Barker with both hands pressed against her throbbing heart, seated on the sofa. James told her who I was, and she held out hand, saying,—

"O, how glad my husband would have been to see you! Many times, when reading your book, has he wished to see you. I thank you for calling, for I know it would have pleased him very much."

"Your loss is very sad and very great, Mrs. Barker; but you do not mourn as those that are without hope, for your husband has long been a Christian, and you have taught your children the way to heaven."

"Yes, my husband has been a member of a Christian church thirty years. He loved his dear Saviour, and we have been trying to live for heaven. We have had piety at home, and I believe that, through faith in a crucified Saviour, all four are now in heaven. But, O, the mysterious ways of Providence!"

"Yes; God does indeed move in a mysterious way, and is His own interpreter; but He so far explains these mysteries, as to tell us that all things work together for good to them that love Him, and that what we know not now of these mysteries, we shall know hereafter."

And here I would observe, that during the day I had been so overwhelmed with the magnitude of the calamity, so bewildered with the scenes of desolation I had witnessed, that I was almost stupefied: I had never shed a tear. But the moment I left James and his mother, I burst out weeping, and was glad I could weep. But my tears were tears of sympathy and joy. Yes, of *joy*, to know that Mrs. Barker felt, amidst her terrible bereavement, that her dear husband and sons were now in paradise; and I could not help exclaiming to myself,—“O, that all the mothers and widows who have lost their husbands and sons could say the same!”

My next visit was to the house of a man whose loss everybody seemed to mourn—Edward Cartwright. He was one of those brought up out of the pit dead, and had left a wife and three children. Edward had been for several years a lay-preacher, and had laboured hard to do good amongst men of his own condition in life, and at least one of those killed attributed his conversion to Edward's instrumentality. His widow was sorely distressed. She told me of his great anxiety to be useful and to do good; how he often, in family prayer, besought the Lord to have mercy on all the miners, and prepare them for all the dangers to which they were exposed, so that if it was sudden death it might be sudden glory. She spoke after long pauses, and after one of these she said,—

“You sit in his chair, sir.”

This thought was too much for her,—she became almost convulsed with anguish. But at parting she said, “My dear Edward is now in heaven, and I shall soon follow.”

It is now pleasing to think that the week before he met his instant death, he was speaking to the people in “Thirty

Row," about being prepared to meet their God, saying,—
"The last month of the year is now come, and we may not all see the first month of the next." Speaking at a church meeting a day or two previous to the explosion, he, after giving out the hymn,

"Earth has many a scene of sorrow,"

Held up both his hands, saying,—
"There will be an amazing difference when I have to exchange my dirty coal-pi cap for a crown of glory."

Edward ! that amazing change has come to thee ! Would that all that perished with thee had so bright a prospect,—and would that the voice of this sad calamity might induce many, but especially the miners, to be wise, and think of their latter end !



LUCY'S LEGACY.

THOSE who are acquainted with the young in our Sunday schools and churches, have often witnessed the deep concern of youthful converts for their unsaved friends and relatives, especially their parents. Pardoned themselves, they have the most intense desire that those they love should enjoy the same blessing ; and, when they see them indifferent to religion, and neglecting their soul's salvation, their fear that they will perish often amounts to bitter agony. One of these, who was daily praying in private for the conversion of her father and mother, told her teacher that if it was a question whether she or they must be saved, she felt she would rather be lost herself, if her loss would secure their eternal safety.

Only those who feel the value of souls, and who weep and pray for those they love, can ever understand this distinguishedness. David felt it for his wicked son Absalom ; Paul felt it for the unbelieving Jews ; and Christ felt it for us all ; and those who are the most like Him will feel the most concern for others. He wept over the sin-smitten cities, and His true followers still mourn over those who reject heaven's mercy, and bring down destruction upon their own heads ; and the young person mentioned in this narrative was for a time one of these mourners.

When Lucy became old enough to understand her condition in life, she found herself the child of parents greatly

different in many respects,—especially in things of the greatest importance. Her father was a strong, healthy, labouring man, with wages barely sufficient for the requirements of their small cottage. He was not unkind, nor was he a drunkard, though, like too many, he had formed the bad habit of spending a few hours in the public house on the Saturday evening, and sometimes on club-night came home rather unsteady. He never attended a place of worship,—not because he “hated parsons,” nor because he doubted the truth of the Bible, or that he objected to religion,—but because he cared, or seemed to care, nothing about divine things;—he was a neglecter. When the Sundays were fine, he would go out to get what he called fresh air, rambling about the streets or fields. At other times he would sit in the house, reading history or the newspapers, or spending most of his time lounging on an old oak couch, resting himself, as he often said, “until his back ached.”

The mother of Lucy was rather tall, very good-looking, orderly, clean, and industrious. She had been in the Sunday-school from a child, but it was not until after her marriage that she began to be concerned about eternal things, or to think seriously about being saved. She had then two young children, four and six years old respectively. Lucy was the eldest, and almost every Sabbath the mother and children might be seen sitting on a form near the church door,—a very humble place, but one the mother always preferred; for she went to the temple as the publican went,—his prayer was her prayer,—and she said that any place in the house of God was precious.

She did not remain long a weeping penitent,—earnest seekers seldom do; and when the sweet, melting powers of saving grace diffused its purifying influence through her

happy soul, it came like the still small voice. But her joy was deep, and one evening, in the fullness of her gratitude, she could not refrain from telling her husband and young children. The husband listened patiently, but made no reply ; the children wept, but did not then understand why ; but Lucy never forgot that night.

When Lucy was about twelve years of age she went to work at the mill, and it was about this time that her mother's health began to fail. One evening Lucy and her little sister were talking in bed about how they loved their mother, and how good she was ; the little sister said,—

“ Lucy, I do think my mother looks more beautiful every day.”

“ Yes when she is not so pale ; when her cheeks are red, as they often are, she looks very beautiful,” replied Lucy.

“ But what does father say she must have the doctor for, Lucy ? ”

“ I cannot tell, except it is because she coughs so much,” was the answer.

Little did these children know the import of their conversation ; others, who knew something of the family history, saw another marked to fall. For several months the mother was able to attend to her housework, and she was frequently so much better that her friends rejoiced in hope she might be spared. But this was not to be : little by little she lost strength, but, like thousands similarly afflicted, she thought when spring returned, she should be well again. She did not cling to life because she feared death. She loved her husband and children, and for their sakes alone she wished to live.

About this time an event took place, which we wish was

more frequent. Several of the teachers of the Sunday school where Lucy attended, had met together for the special object of praying that the Lord would send the convincing and converting influence of the Holy Spirit among the senior scholars. God heard their prayers, and many began earnestly to seek the Lord, and believed to the saving of their souls. Lucy was one of this happy number, and when her mother heard of this, her joy was great ; and especially when her other child, Rachel, near eleven years old, began to ask what she must do to be saved. The mother was in raptures ; and had her husband been brought to seek for mercy, her cup of bliss would have been almost full.

It was at this period I became acquainted with this interesting family, learned what is already narrated, and witnessed most of what follows.

I had been addressing a large gathering of young people, after which many of them wished to speak to me on various subjects ; amongst them was Lucy. She had a request from her mother that I would call and see her, if possible, before I returned to Rochdale. I called, and found her seated in a large arm-chair, carefully wrapped in a dark woollen shawl. Near her stood a small table on which was her Bible, two half oranges, and a small basin of sago gruel. The cottage was very neat and clean ; Lucy had done it all. for though she was not yet fourteen, her mother had trained her well. She had been forced to leave the mill to nurse her sick parent, and willingly she did her work.

When are we happiest ? In the crowded hall,
When fortune smiles, and flatterers bend the knee ?
How soon, how very soon such empty pleasures pall,
How fast such fleeting rainbow pleasures flee !
We are not happy there.

When are we happiest ? O, when resigned
To whatsoe'er our cup of life may bring ;
When we can know ourselves but weak and blind
Creatures of earth, and trust alone to Him
Who giveth in His mercy joy or pain !
O, we are happiest then.

And such was now the happiness of Lucy's mother. The last enemy's dart had once again found its mark, and soon the victim would quiver and fall. But there was no murmuring, no repining, no doubts, no fears. She was dying, and she knew it ; yet how calm, how composed, how unspeakably happy ; and in the only way in which it is possible for any being to be truly happy. She was resting her soul, body, circumstances, and prospects on Jesus ; and, as the golden orb of day, on a calm summer evening, when sinking down the western sky, gilds as he does all around with glory, suggesting thoughts of grander glories still, so did this dying saint behold by faith her home prepared by Christ in the mansions of the blest, and, as she passed away, showed the same glorious path to heaven.

Lucy brought a low buffet and sat beside her mother's knee, eagerly catching every word we spoke. My words were few, for I felt I was in the presence of an experience I had yet to acquire. She told me of her own conversion, and of the peace she had since enjoyed. She told me of the goodness of God in permitting her to see her two children, like Mary, choosing the "good part" in their early days. She then paused, and for a time was silent. I did not like to speak, for I saw she was under some deep emotion. Recovering herself a little, she said,—

"O, how I did want to see my husband saved before I died ! I have long prayed for this, and I believe it will

yet come." Then taking hold of Lucy's hand, she said, "Lucy, my child, I want you to promise me you will never give him up ; never, no, never !"

Lucy buried her face in her mother's lap, weeping and sobbing, and, with an earnestness that showed it came from an overflowing heart, said,—

"Mother, I never will, I never will. O, mother, we shall all meet you in heaven !"

The mother, smiling through her tears, said,—

"Thank you, my child, for that promise. Your young sister will help you ; and I leave you this as a legacy, especially to you, Lucy."

Let us not think lightly of this affectionate, dying mother's request to Lucy, or doubt the influence of early piety. Most of the brightest ornaments of the Church of Christ found the Saviour while young, and some of them while very young, and began to exert an influence for good amongst their youthful acquaintances, and especially amongst those of their own family. Had the church more confidence in early conversions, more faith in the power of saving grace to reach our children, many cheering harvests would spring up amongst those who once sung hosannas in the streets of Jerusalem to the world's Redeemer. God did, and God can, from the mouths of babes and sucklings bring forth praise.

We know a girl who, one Sunday morning, was getting ready for the school, when three wicked men called for her father to go with them to a dog-race on the moors. The father promised to follow them on in a few moments. He sat down to his breakfast ; but his child was so shocked at the thoughts of her father going to a dog-race, especially on the Sabbath-day, that she could not help weeping.

"What is the matter with you, Sarah ?" asked her father,

The child went and leaned on his shoulder, and, putting her small thin fingers through his rough hair, said,—

“Father, should you go to the dog-races on Sunday, will not God see you?”

“Bless thee, child, how thee talks! Away with thee to the school, and never mind me,” replied the father.

“I will, if you promise me that you will not go,” she said, still stroking down his hair with her delicate fingers.

“But I told the men I would go,” he replied.

“Yes, but God will forgive you if you do not go, but He will not if you do; and I shall cry all the day about you.”

“Bless the child, how she talks! Away with thee to the school, and I will not go.”

She pressed both his cheeks with her small hands, and ran off to the school, as happy as a little queen.

But that was not all; that same evening this little lady had hold of the horny hand of her father, leading him to the chapel. She could read better than he could, and found the hymns, and stood on the form to be high enough to see the words. Nor was that all; several months after, this man, when giving his experience, previous to being admitted a member of the church, mentioned his child's conduct that Sunday morning he was going to the dog-race, as the beginning of his concern for pardon. He expressed his thankfulness to the Almighty that he had such a child, and said he felt, that if he had gone to that dog-race, God would have taken the child from him.

Two months after I had called to see Lucy's mother, about twelve o'clock one evening, there was a scene in the humble cottage. The father stood at the head of the bed holding the hand of his dying wife; Lucy and Rachel knelt at her side, in speechless sorrow, and two neighbours sat at a dis-

tance, silently looking on. There were a few last words faintly spoken : these last words were,—

“ Dear husband, see in my greatest need what religion can do. I wished to see you a child of God before I departed, but I have left a legacy to my children, and, when I am gone, Lucy will tell you what it is.”

Feebly, very feebly, were these words spoken, and her soul in the company of the waiting angel, went away to glory.

For several months after the mother's death, Lucy's father was very regular in returning home. He went less to the public-house, and once or twice attended the church with his two children. He had some suspicion what the legacy was that his dying wife had left, but did not ask. Lucy durst not yet tell him, and nearly two years rolled over before it was explained. Lucy did most of the home work; a little help from a neighbour on the washing-day was all she required, and things were moderately comfortable. But there was this one thing, this one cause of concern,—father was not a Christian. Lucy sometimes thought he would never be saved ; that he would grow harder and harder in his indifference, and this gave her great anxiety. But she held fast to the promise made to her mother ; she did not and would not give him up.

About this period a circumstance occurred, that greatly encouraged her to persevere in praying for her father. She had a young, pious companion in the church, named Ellen, who had a careless, prayerless mother. Believing in the power of prayer, she had set apart ten minutes every day to plead with God for her mother's salvation. About seven o'clock every evening, the time she was most at liberty from her work, she went up stairs to her bed-room, to ask again

and again for the burning desire of her soul,—her mother's conversion.

The mother had witnessed a great change in her daughter. She was always affectionate and kind, but had been unusually so for many months. She never seemed weary in helping her mother in the house, and did everything very cheerfully. Often had she requested her mother to go with her to her place of worship, but there was always some excuse,—she never would go. Ellen's going up stairs about the same time each evening, surprised her mother. She had noticed that sometimes, when she came down, her eyes were red with weeping, and determined to know what was going on. One evening when Ellen was gone up, the mother took off her shoes, gently went about half way up the steps, and sat down to listen ; she then heard in a soft, subdued, but earnest voice, words that sent a thrill through her whole soul.

On the following Friday evening, Ellen was quietly sewing by the fireside, and her mother was ironing. Without turning round, her mother said,—

“ Ellen, have you been praying for me ? ”

Ellen was greatly astonished at this unexpected question. Her face grew red, and her eyes filled with tears, and, when able to speak, she said,—

“ O, mother, I could not help it, I could not help it ! I feel so concerned for your soul.”

Soon after this, Ellen had the unspeakable delight to walk beside her mother to the chapel, and to see her become a member of the church.

When Lucy heard of this, she was more and more determined not to give her father up. She, too, had a set time for prayer, and often had so much faith that she was now

expecting it every day. Had the father known of this surely it would have softened his hard heart. And he did know at last, for one evening on returning home much earlier than expected, and finding the door a little open, he entered without being heard. He stood for a moment wondering where his daughter was, and, hearing a voice up stairs, he was on the point of calling out, but, on listening, he became fixed to the spot. Lucy, thinking that no one but God heard her, was pleading for her father.

"O Lord," she said, "Thou knowest I promised my mother I would never give my dear father up ; nor I never will. Thou saved my mother, Thou hast saved me and my sister, and Thou can save him. O Lord, do save my dear, dear father, and I will praise Thee for ever."

Fearing that Lucy might know he had heard her prayer, he silently stepped out, leaving the door as he found it, and set out on a short walk. But it was such a walk as he had never had before, and his thoughts were loud thoughts. "This is the MOTHER'S LEGACY," said he ; "I thought what it was, but now I know. I have always thought my children the best children in the world, and now I think better of them than ever. But what shall I do ? I cannot stand this ; and yet, what shall I do ?"

So much of the family I knew when circumstances separated us. Lucy's father lost his work, and had to remove into another county to get employment. Eleven years after, I was attending a religious gathering, and, in my address to the people, mentioned the Mother's Legacy. The moment I had done so, two females who sat near the platform, seemed greatly affected. I could not tell why, and feared I had said something wrong. After the meeting was over, these two females followed me into the vestry, and I at once recognized

Lucy and Rachel, both dressed in black. I did not ask them any questions, as I feared their father was dead, and I well remembered the legacy. Lucy suspected my thoughts, and smiling, said,—

“I see you are afraid to ask about my father, Mr. Ashworth.”

“I am, Lucy,” I replied.

“Well, I know why ; but you do not need, for we have good news. You saw us a few weeks before we removed into this neighbourhood. The last Sabbath we lived in the dear old place, my father went with us to the church, and wished us all to see mother’s grave before we went away. We all three stood round the spot in silence. My father, reading my mother’s name, said, as if talking to her,—

“You left a legacy to your children, Martha, and I now know what it is, and thank you for it.”

“O how my heart did beat when he mentioned the legacy, and said he knew what it was ! We had never told him,—how had he got to know ?

“That night, before retiring to rest, knowing it was the last day we should reside in the cottage where we were born, and where mother had died, we were very sad. I had locked the door, and Rachel and I were just going up stairs, when father said,—

“Lucy, I heard your prayer for me on Tuesday evening, and then learned what mother’s request was. I know you are both anxious that I should go with you to chapel and be a Christian ; don’t give me up. Will you kneel down now and pray for me ?”

“We did all kneel down, but we could not pray ; we did nothing but weep, and we rose up, not having spoken one word. What a night was that for us all ! The following

Sunday we all three went to the new house of prayer, about one mile from this place, and during the sermon father was completely broken down. Soon after he found peace ; and we think he is one of the best and holiest of men, and we are a very happy family."

"When I saw you in mourning, I feared your father was dead," I observed.

"O no, we are in black for our grandmother,—my father's mother. She was a good creature, and died in great peace. When she heard of my father's conversion, she was in ecstasies ; and though she was seventy-five years of age, she said she was so glad that she felt as if she could leap over the house."

We have in this narrative another illustration of the passage—"sowing in tears, reaping in joy." And what a joy ! To see those we love walking with us in the way to heaven, is amongst the highest pleasures we can know in this life. To feel that when we part here, we shall soon meet again and be for ever re-united on the pearly plains of paradise, makes our prospects of heaven more heavenly still. All children may not see their parents saved, as in this case, but there are many thousands of cases where the child has been the instrument of the parent's salvation.

To those of my young friends who have parents out of the way, like Lucy's mother, I would say,—never give them up. Heaven has given us a promise firm as the everlasting hills ; "All things, *whatsoever* ye shall ask *believing*, ye *shall* receive." With a promise like this, is it not strange that more of our parents are not converted ? Never give them up. When you are discouraged, and feel tempted to despair of their salvation, remember LUCY'S LEGACY.

EDMUND.

WHILE reading over the names in the old Bible class roll-book of our Sabbath-school, thoughts are often suggested both painful and pleasing. When James Kershaw, once a poor boy, but afterwards Member of Parliament for Stockport, revisited the Sunday-school of his early days, and looked over the old class-book to find his own name, he was gratified to see that for seven years he had not been once absent when a scholar, and double that number of years when a teacher; and, while putting back the book into the desk, he expressed his conviction that his attachment to the Sunday-school, and his deep regard for the Sabbath, was the foundation of all his blessings, temporal and spiritual.

Give me a young man that has deep regard for the Sabbath,—that reveres as sacred the Lord's day,—he may not like Mr. Kershaw, become a member of the House of Commons, but depend upon it, he will have no mean social position. From this will spring almost every other good; he shall “ride upon the high places of the earth.” But show me a young man that thinks lightly of the Sabbath, and seeks worldly pleasures on that day,—he will soon think lightly of the school, the church, the Bible, and everything sacred, and blast his own prospects in life, sink down in wickedness, poverty, and often in crime. The young man whose name stands at the head of this sketch, is a painful,

though far from solitary, illustration of this truth, as our Bible-class records can testify.

Edmund was about the same age as myself, and, along with others sat with me on a good strong three-inch thick form, supported by six round legs. We had two teachers, attending each alternate Sunday. One of them was a tall, patient, red-cheeked man, with soft hands, kind words, and a loving heart. We called him "Old James," and we all loved him. The other was a stern, bad-tempered man, with a stick, which he took care to make us all well acquainted with. Some people say that you may flog a lad any time, for he is always either going into mischief or just coming out. Our stern teacher seemed to be one of this class of thinkers, for he laid on right and left. Perhaps we deserved it, if so, we got it, but none of us liked it.

One Sunday morning Old James was talking to us about heaven. We had been reading the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, and the old man seemed almost in paradise while he was reading and talking with us about it. Never before that day had I such a view of that happy place. Old James saw we were all affected, and he laid his soft hands on our heads, one by one, and besought us to be good lads, and keep holy the Sabbath-day, and then we should go to that glorious place of which we had been reading.

Most of us had taken our dinners to the school, for nearly all in that class resided two or three miles from the place. At noon we gathered round the large, warm stove, in the bottom of the chapel, and began to untie our small linen handkerchiefs, to see what we had brought for dinner. I well remember mine was an apple-cake, the half of a circle, with the widest *selvedge* of any apple-cake I had ever seen. But it is a queer cake a hungry lad will turn his back upon,

so I began digging my teeth into the selvedge, wondering when I should get to the apple. But when I remembered that the cake was as good as my poor dear mother could afford to make, and that she had made the best of what she had to do with, that settled all my questions, and I finished it without a murmur.

As we sat round the stove, we began to talk about heaven, our morning lesson. Edmund said to me,—

“Johnny, does thou think thou will ever get to heaven?”

“I hope I shall, Edmund,” I replied.

“And where wilt thou sit in heaven :—with Old James, or with him with the stick?” Edmund asked.

“With Old James, to be sure,” was my answer.

“So will I, and so will I,” said the other lads all round.

That day we were all very good, and made a bargain that we would always go to the school, and keep the Sabbath-day holy, as Old James had requested us.

Spring came, and with the spring came a great misfortune to Edmund :—he got a new swallow-tailed coat, or, as we called it, a jacket with laps. So long as he had only a round jacket, like the rest of us, he seemed all right, but the laps made him quite a somebody. He thought and said he was too big now to go to Sunday-school ; so he left us and went away, taking his laps with him. It is a dangerous thing to turn some lads out of round jackets into laps, as Edmund’s case proved.

It was many months before I met with Edmund again ; but one Sunday evening, on returning from the school, I saw him in company with several others, who, twelve months before, he would not have been seen with. He stood on the top of a hedge, a short distance from the high-

way, and, the moment he saw me, he put his hands to his mouth and shouted,—

“Amen ! amen ! let us pray ;” and then, with his companions, burst out laughing.

I stood still, and, looking at Edmund, said, speaking loud so that he could hear,—

“Edmund, is this keeping the Sabbath-day holy, as you promised you would ?”

But this only brought a fresh peal of laughter, with another “Amen ! amen !”

Young as I then was, I could see that Edmund made a great mistake when he thought he was too big to attend to Sunday-school. He had now become the companion of fools, and could mock at the Sabbath. It was easy to predict what would follow, for the way in which a person regards the Lord's day is always a test of character. It is God's day,—the Sabbath of the Lord. It was mercifully given to man,—to all men,—at creation ; confirmed when the law was given to Sinai ; and the commandment then written by the hand of God Himself, imperatively demanded it should be kept holy. It was made for man, that he, his son, his daughter, his man-servant, his maid-servant, the stranger, and even his toiling cattle, should enjoy it as a day of rest. It was not given to the Jews only ; it no more belongs exclusively to the Jews than do all the other commandments. The ten commandments are for all nations, and are binding to the end of time. “Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.” But it is doubtful if ever such a man, except he repent, gets to heaven at all.

Isaiah, when speaking of the blessed day, says, "If thou turn from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." There is something more in these words than mere *resting*; but it was ordered to be a day of rest, that it might be better kept as a day of holiness. Yet this day, given by heaven as a blessing, is by thousands turned into a curse; for they are more wicked on this day than any other. And, though they have the advantage of ceasing from work on that day, because of the commandment, yet they hate its holy character. The infidels of France, during the reign of reason, terror, and bloodshed, abolished the Sabbath, but there was soon a terrible retribution. Let men say what they will, all the armies of Christendom cannot change one "Thus saith the Lord;" come to pass it must, and the events of every-day life amply prove it.

Todd, the American writer, tells us that every merchant in New York who kept his office open all or part of the Sabbath-day failed in business; that, in twenty years, at least forty Sabbath-breaking merchants went to ruin,—not one escaped.

In the neighbourhood of Rochdale, there is a place called Bridge Mill. A good old Christian, of the name of William Heape, rented this mill from a large and wealthy woollen manufacturer, of the name of Walmsley, residing at Castle-mere. One Sunday morning, Walmsley sent Heape word that he must see all the men to work that day, and get ready

some pieces that were much wanted. Heape returned for answer, that by one o'clock on the Monday morning he would begin, and do all he could, but he must be excused working on the Sunday. Walmsley was much offended at the answer, and sent his own warehousemen to do the pressing and packing of the pieces. The cart containing the goods had to pass through the brook called the Roach, that ran close to the mill. The river had risen during the day, but, being night, they could not see this, and the horse, cart, and goods were all upset and carried down the stream. The warehousemen screamed out when they saw the cart turn over. Mrs. Heape, hearing them, ran out of the house to see what was wrong, and, seeing the goods floating down the stream, said,—

“There goes your Sunday work!”

The house and wealth of Walmsley have passed into other hands, but William Heape, the lover and observer of the Sabbath, greatly prospered, and his many sons, treading in their father's steps, have proved the words of Isaiah true.

Kings and rulers may take counsel together against heaven's laws, but He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh at them. To go against a *Thus saith the Lord*, will bring inevitable ruin; and one *Thus saith the Lord* is, “Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.”

If it should be asked,—“But what has all this to do with Edmund?”—my answer is, that his subsequent life will show what misery a disregard of the Lord's day almost invariably entails. We saw him last standing on the top of the hedge, shouting and mocking one of his school-mates. Three other scenes in his career will show the consequences of his early follies.

A rough, drunken character, that sometimes attended the

Chapel for the Destitute, came to request I would go to see a young man who was very ill in one of our lodging-houses. He said,—

“I guess he is somebody’s child, and should not be left to die like a dog. He says he knows you ; come, go wi’ me and pray wi’ him, if he wants it ; that will do no harm, at ony rate.”

I at once went with the rough messenger, and found a young man doubled up with pain, in a miserable bed. He groaned, and entreated some one to put something warm to his feet. I immediately got the oven plate, wrapped in an old rag, and pressed it to his cold feet. This soon brought relief. I had not seen his face, for he covered his head with the bed-clothes the moment I went into the room, and seemed determined I should not know him. But the rough man said to him.—

“Hold up thy face, Ned, and let Mr. Ashworth see who thee art. What art te feard on ? He will happen buy thee a drop o’ brandy ; for thee needs something for inside as well as eawt.”

The dirty sheet was pulled off Ned’s face, and I found that it was my old Sunday-school fellow, Edmund. He had been drinking for several days, fell ill, and crept into a common lodging-house, as he thought to die ; but care and nursing, all at my expense, brought him round. I bought him a shirt and a pair of stockings, and he began work again, thankful for the kindness shown him. He told me during his sickness, that he never attended a place of worship for years, but that he never saw people going to the chapel or church, without envying them ; that he was most miserable on the Sunday, and thousands of times had wished that

he had followed the advice of Old James, and kept the Sabbath-day holy.

Poor Edmund ! he envied those that he saw keeping the Sabbath holy, and going to the house of God ; and well he might.

There are many beautiful scenes in this beautiful world, but there is one that has to me the most cheering interest, and awakens the most joyous thoughts. I am not insensible to the silent but impressive language of God's visible universe,—the heavens, the everlasting hills, the majestic rocks, the woods, the dells, the fields, the flowers,—these fill the mind with deep emotions, and give birth to unutterable feelings. But there is a sight still grander, awakening emotions still higher and nobler, when, on the Sabbath morn, you see the gathering of thousands of God's people, old and young, to their various Zions, to mingle their voices in praises to Him whose voice called forth those glorious heavens, those hills, rocks, fields, and flowers. It is then that heaven seems nearest to earth, and the glories of the temple above are reflected in the temple below.

“ How sweet a Sabbath thus to spend,
In hopes of one that ne'er shall end ! ”

The next time I saw Edmund, was under still more painful circumstances. I had been several days serving on the jury, at the Manchester Quarter Sessions, and, perhaps in consequence of my name beginning with “ A,” was appointed foreman. There were many persons to be tried for stealing, and amongst the number I was sorry to find the name of my old Bible-class mate. The charge against him was that, along with three others, he had stolen a sack of malt. Edmund was the least guilty ; he had nothing to do with

the stealing, but part of the malt was found in a bag under his bed. The trial did not last long, for there was no doubt of their guilt. Being the foreman it was my duty to pronounce the finding of the jury, and when the court-cryer, with a loud voice, cried out, "Gentlemen of the jury, do you find Edmund——guilty or not guilty?" with a heavy heart I looked at Edmund. Our eyes met, and in his eyes I could read the working of his soul; they plainly said, "Have pity on me!" A choking sensation arose to my throat, and I was very near breaking down before I could pronounce the word—"Guilty!"

The rest of the jury seemed surprised at my emotion, but I did not tell them that the guilty prisoner at the bar was once a happy, innocent lad in our happy Sunday-school class. Edmund's sentence was six weeks' imprisonment, with hard labour.

Jurymen, after their work is done, have the privilege, if they wish it, of going through the cells, wards, and workshops of the prison. On this occasion we all agreed to go together and see, what I am sorry can be seen in any part of this country. I stood on a balcony, looking at a number of men dressed in coarse, black woollen cloth, with yellow stripes, turning a large wheel with their feet;—this was the tread mill. Edmund was one of these, and while I stood looking at the panting men, it was Edmund's turn to come off. He went straight to a pump that stood near, and taking hold of the chained tin cup, he drank deep and long, then wiped the sweat from his face, and sat down till his turn came again. It was heavy work, and I could not help thinking of the words, "The way of transgressors is hard." I felt truly sorry for Edmund, and was glad he did not see me, for I did not want to cause him pain by the wide con-

trast. I had not then, nor have I yet, anything of which I can boast ; but I do believe that a love and constant regard for the Sabbath, has saved me from those snares into which many of my early acquaintances have fallen. After Edmund came out of prison, he was comparatively steady for many years. He kept away from thieves, but still most of his Sundays were spent in the public-house. I had often invited him to attend some place of worship, and never again to touch one drop of drink. Again and again he promised to turn over a new leaf, but he did not. An old proverb says, that "the way to hell is paved with good intentions." Good resolutions, made in our own strength, are as weak as a straw.

Another message came,—this time brought by an old woman. She informed me that she had a man staying at her house dying of consumption,—that he kept calling out,—"Will some one go and fetch John Ashworth? I am sure he will come if you tell him how ill I am. Do go and fetch him!"

We need not be surprised, when death stares the wicked man in the face, that he should be anxious for the company of praying men. When sickness lays a man on his bed, and, in the quiet hours, memory begins to travel back, and the black way-marks of life rise up to the vision,—when conscience can no longer be smothered, and the soul begins to realize and shudder at his gloomy prospects, one that knew something of this tells us that,—

"The soul that broods o'er guilty woes,
Is like the scorpion girt by fire ;
So writhes the mind remorse has riven ;
Undone for earth, unfit for heaven ;
Darkness above, despair beneath ;
Within it fire, around it death."

I have long made allowance for the ungodly, even for the mocker and scorner at religion while in health, when the time of testing comes, as come it will, wanting the counsel and prayers of those they may have once slighted, but whom they now regard as the happiest of mortals, and would give a thousand worlds to be as they are.

These were my views and feelings when I entered the sick room of Edmund, for he it was that the old woman had fetched me to see. I was glad this time to find him in a clean, decent place.

"I am fain you are come, John, but you have only come to see a wreck,—a poor skeleton," were Edmund's first words.

"But why are you glad to see me? I fear I can do but little for you now, Edmund."

"But surely I must not die as I am,—unprepared, unprepared; surely not, surely not!"

"But I cannot save you, Edmund, nor all the men in the world; no, nor all the saints and angels in heaven."

"But surely I must be saved, John; what must I do? do tell me!"

"Do you believe you are a sinner, Edmund?"

"Yes, I do," was his reply.

"Do you *feel* that you are a sinner?—for there is a vast difference between simply believing it and feeling it."

"Yes, I do John," he replied.

Do you believe that Christ died for you, and that He can save you?"

"Yes, I believe he could; but I don't believe He ever will."

"Then there is no hope for you. If you don't believe He *will* save you, how can you be saved?"

"Well, then, I can never be saved ; for I have been so wicked and sinned so long, and done it with my eyes wide open, for I knew better. Sabbath-breaking has brought me to this ; that was my first wrong step. O that I could undo what I have done ; but this can never be ! What must be done ? "

"Believe that Christ will save you, Edmund," I answered.

"But how can I ?—how can I ? "

"Because He says He will, and you ought to believe Him, for if you don't you grieve Him."

"Where does Christ say that ? Do tell me, John."

"You read many times in the Bible-class, at school, these words : "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,—He came to seek and to save that which was lost ; " and to those that are burdened with sin, He says, "Come to me, and I will give you rest."

I then paused, to let the merciful words of a merciful Saviour have their full weight. For a long time we were silent ; I feared to disturb his thoughts, for he was evidently surprised at what had been said. I took out my handkerchief to wipe the tears that were running down each side of his face, but still I spoke not. Heaving a deep sigh, he quietly turned his head, and, looking me in the face, slowly said,—

"Is it so ?—is there mercy for me ? "

Seeing he was exhausted, I took my pocket Testament, read some portions suitable for his condition, and then knelt down to plead for poor Edmund. O how precious to me was the sinner's Friend at that moment !

During that night Edmund was taken with a fit of coughing, and burst a blood vessel ; and when I called the follow-

ing morning, I saw a worn-out body covered with a white sheet. Edmund was dead.

Do I think he was saved? the reader will anxiously ask. I dare not answer the question. The Judge of all the earth will do right, but if the Sabbath-breakers take warning, my object will be answered in writing this narrative of my old school-fellow, EDMUND.







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